

FIRST THINGS

THAT THEY MAY HAVE LIFE

A Statement of Evangelicals and Catholics Together

THIS HEARTBREAKING COURT

Hadley Arkes

WHEN THE SWALLOWS

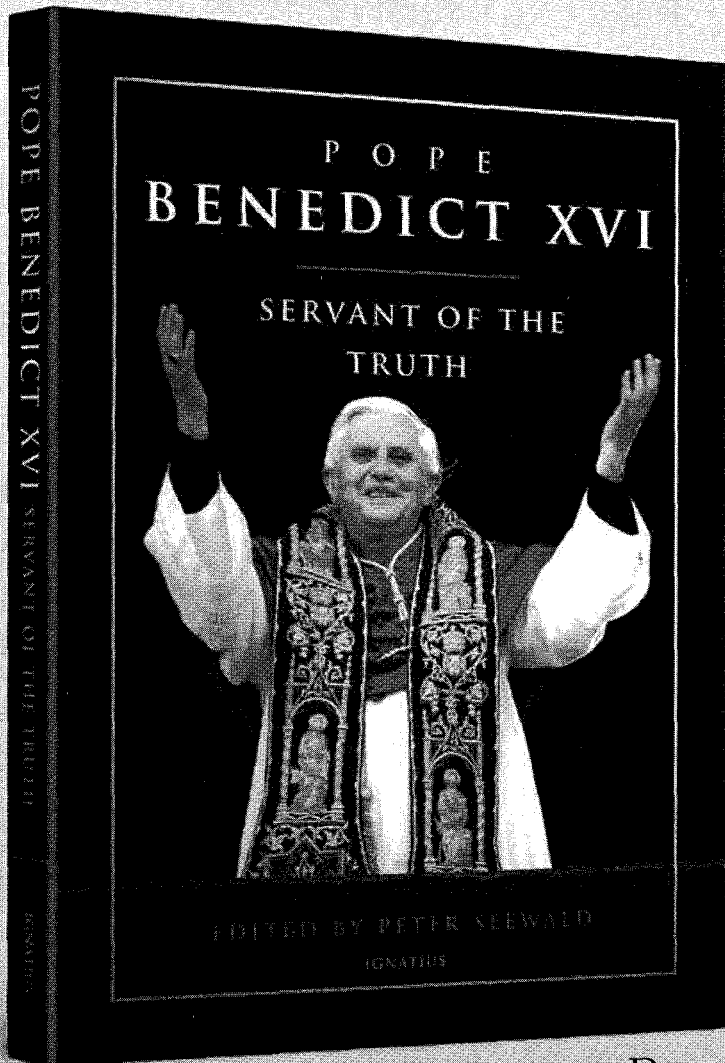
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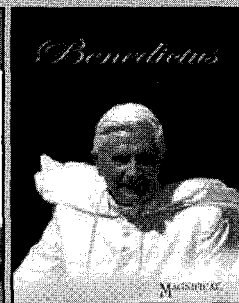
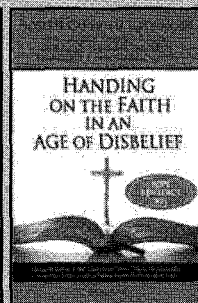
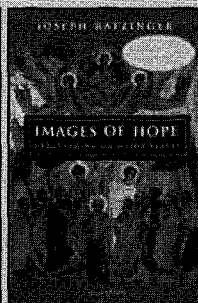
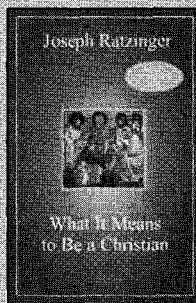
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Farr Gone on Religion

In response to Thomas F. Farr's "The Diplomacy of Religious Freedom" (May): Before a temporary assignment to Vietnam and Indonesia last year, I received a briefing by the State Department's office of religious freedom, then directed by Ambassador Farr. The team of which I was part was mightily impressed by the dynamism and dedication of his staff. One result of the 1998 International Religious Freedom Act passed by Congress, which Ambassador Farr was responsible for implementing, was the institution of a separate religious-freedom report required of all embassies annually, amplifying what used to be merely one section of the annual human rights report. Both reports demonstrably effect change in the conduct of foreign governments. Ambassador Farr himself led a superhuman effort to charge up our embassies and consulates to further religious freedom. Given the untold hours they spent on the effort, it would be news to them that his office was marginalized within the State Department.

I respectfully differ from Ambassador Farr about the prevalence of a secular mentality in the State Department. On entering the Foreign Service forty years ago, I expected an anti-religious or at least irreverent attitude on the part of senior officers who came from a much more sophisticated background than my own in Vermont. Over the years, I found the opposite to be generally true. Not a few Catholic officers at the top of the State Department were daily communicants. Senior Protestants distinguished themselves by a rigorous, religiously based moral code. Jews were usually the most respectful and understanding of other religions.

Ambassador Farr would perhaps not deny this. He just believes that the State Department feels driven by its convictions and experience to separate religion from international politics.

It is true, American diplomats believe that, by and large, secular discourse provides a safer common ground to explore political solutions than does religious discussion. Common ground is very difficult to hold, and it erodes as religious fervor rises. Better to shift the framework of talks, if possible, to worldly advantages that all can agree are desirable.

It may be a misperception, but religion and pragmatism often seem to work against each other. Muslim terrorists hear directly from God who deserves to die and why. In India, waves of religious fervor washed over secular compromises brokered at independence, so that a government stood by while Hindu mobs destroyed a much-venerated historic mosque. In Northern Ireland, religious pedigrees helped to determine whether a victim was extrajudicially murdered or merely neutralized. In Palestine today, Jewish civilian squatters invoke divine dispensation for taking over the land of others. Religious practice by non-Muslims in Saudi Arabia is punished by the very Muslims who boast of Islam's historical tolerance for other religions.

Every diplomat knows that religion is nearly everything to many people. Ambassador Farr is right that religious attitudes play a huge part in the actions and motivations of opposing parties in international life. An effective diplomacy could never exist without this understanding. But American diplomats already act on the knowledge.

Our consul general at the American Consulate General in Surabaya

was responsible for a consular district the size of Europe, with 100 million Muslims. This is half the total number of Muslims in Indonesia, the largest Muslim country in the world. The consul general was fluent in Bahasa-Indonesian. With his tiny staff, he traveled the length and breadth of his district, which comprised Muslims but included a few radicals intent on blowing him up. He explained U.S. policy on Muslim radio channels, visited Muslim religious schools, awarded prizes at civic debates, and repeatedly met with Muslim journalists to correct misimpressions of U.S. actions. He interviewed the new leader of a 50 million member Muslim benevolence society in the leader's hotel room minutes after his election, when he probed for Muslim attitudes toward the United States on issues such as Iraq and the tsunami.

The State Department is far from indifferent to religion. Telegrams have poured into the State Department for decades from our embassies and consulates, emphasizing the role that religion plays in the decisions of nations. Failure to act on the warnings and recommendations does not lie with the Foreign Service.

John J. Eddy
Minister-Counselor (retired)
U.S. Department of State
Rochester, Vermont

It was refreshing to see someone, namely Thomas Farr in his "The Diplomacy of Religious Freedom" (May), attempting to take religion seriously as the "missing dimension" of U.S. foreign policy. Indeed, many in the United States and the centers of media simply see the Bush administration and its policies as modern evangelical crusaders let loose upon the world. Yet the reality, as Farr rightly observes, is that secularization still remains the bread and butter of U.S. relations with the rest of the world.

Farr, however, intimates a great deal of optimism in the hope the

United States might change its religion-blind ways, thereby leading to democratic success in the Middle East.

Farr mentions a new generation of young, religiously sensitive officers in American embassies, as well as the potential power of the president and secretary of state to affect change. But do these possibilities really offer the kind of sight to the blind that Farr is urging?

My personal experience of living in Egypt gives some cause for concern. As Farr correctly mentions, the radical Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt recently secured eighty-eight seats on the People's Assembly, reaching beyond the critical 25 percent mark of that body. The Brotherhood, indeed, "is rapidly positioning itself as the primary political opposition to the Mubarak regime, but the United States has no direct means of influencing it." Even under Mubarak's regime, democracy is not a reality, as evinced by the recent arrests of two judges who spoke out against Mubarak's overwhelming victory in the last "democratic" election and the plight of the Egyptian Christian minority.

What Farr recognizes and what the United States seems presently blind to is that Egypt and the Middle East (more generally) live and breathe religion. Religion is not the Western private act but rather the most common public currency. During public calls to prayer, people pray in the streets, in their shops, or on trains. Copies of the Qur'an can be found openly displayed on every good taxi driver's dash. Perhaps the most common phrase I hear every day in Arabic is *Hamdulillah*—"praise be to Allah."

Furthermore, this centrality of religion has never been envisioned as a separate institution from government, as it is in the United States' separation of church and state. While in America, the most radical liberal and conservative can agree on this princi-

ple (though to varying degrees), Islam has always worked hand-in-glove with the political mechanism of a state. The idea that they would be separate is alien.

Thus, when "democracy" as mere "rule by the people" is introduced in the Middle East, the result should not be surprising. My Egyptian Christian friends point to the great irony that the American push for democracy in their country has brought about the quite "democratic" (in its most rudimentary sense) and largest election of Islamic fundamentalists ever to their government. Give the people a choice, and it turns out they choose religion and governance by religion as the only thing they know.

Indeed, the Muslim Brotherhood's party slogan in the past elections was simple but persuasive: "Islam is the solution." A wise Christian pastor I know took a mock election sign with this party line and changed the first letters of the Arabic word *Islam* to render it *saalem* ("peace"). Peace is the solution, but my question for Farr is: Is it really in sight? If it is to succeed in the Middle East, a form of democracy that embraces religion and yet also includes the typical expanded democratic hallmarks of freedom of religion and other basic rights (not just simple elections by the people) must be introduced. There are some signs of hope that democracy could be embraced, but there are also many apparent obstacles.

Whatever the case, Farr is entirely correct that the current form of secularist policy by the United States will not be able to encounter adequately the deep religious roots of Middle Eastern society. We can only hope and pray that the eyes of those in power in the United States might be opened to a deeper understanding of religion, even as the eyes of those in the Middle East might be opened to a deeper understanding of democracy.

Stephen R. Ogden
Christian volunteer
Minya, Egypt

Thomas Farr replies:

I am grateful to John J. Eddy and Stephen R. Ogden for their thoughtful challenges to my argument. That argument holds that U.S. diplomacy, while willing enough to see religion as part of the problem, has been unimaginative in making it part of the solution, especially when it comes to Islam. Eddy suggests I am too pessimistic about American diplomacy, Ogden that I am too optimistic about Islam.

Eddy's case is the more unusual. He argues that diplomats understand the importance of religion; otherwise "effective diplomacy could never exist." He recalls serious religious believers in the State Department and cites a consul general who engaged effectively with Indonesian Muslims. Moreover, he writes, American foreign service officers would be surprised to learn that the office responsible for promoting international religious freedom was marginalized within the State Department.

Eddy is quite right on one point: Observant Christians and Jews have always been present at the State Department and in the diplomatic service. Today there are even a few serious Muslims, a very important addition. Moreover, our foreign service attracts bright minds and hard workers. But my argument is not about the religious practices of diplomats or the effectiveness of individual officers.

American foreign service officers are generally adept at mastering foreign cultures. Thanks in part to the International Religious Freedom Act, some are developing relationships with religious communities, as diplomats have traditionally done with, say, political parties or labor movements. It is also true that the United States is doing interesting things in Indonesia (one of the exceptions mentioned in the article), such as supporting madrasa curriculum reform. The point is that these are largely ad hoc developments rather

than parts of a broad strategy to engage an increasingly religious world, especially the Muslim parts of it. One can certainly hope that U.S. programs in Indonesia become models for American policy in Iran, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and other nations where Islamist extremism is being nourished. But don't hold your breath.

As for whether the office of international religious freedom is isolated at Foggy Bottom, I'm afraid the evidence is overwhelming. It is a subordinate office in a marginalized bureau, and its head, an ambassador-at-large, is treated (incorrectly and unwisely) as a mid-level official. As noted, the office is growing and its officials are some of the best you'll find in the department. But they are mostly drawn from outside the foreign service, whose officers know that working there will not be good for their careers. This must change if our religious-freedom policy is to be effective.

Finally, Eddy concedes an important point. Our diplomats, he writes, know that "religious discussion" stimulates religious fervor, so they seek the safer ground of secular discourse. I certainly don't deny the need to discuss secular things with religious people. We've got to help Iraqi Shiites train a professional military and Afghan Sunnis build a free-market economy. But when people see the world in religious terms, their armies are more likely to function professionally and their markets to flourish if they understand these actions as consistent with belief.

More to the point, when the United States has an opportunity to keep Islamists on the right side of extremism (let alone embrace liberal democracy), we better have the depth of understanding and the vocabulary to do it. That vocabulary must include more than elections, women's movements, and constitutional checks and balances, as vital as those issues are. We must also be prepared to inte-

grate into the conversation concepts like the will of God in the political order, the proper differentiation between religious and civil authority, and the role of human freedom in the religious quest. Surely a nation founded on those very concepts can, in order to protect its own vital interests, develop a "religious discourse" that conveys how religion and liberal governance can flourish together.

Two inadvertent errors of fact in Eddy's letter require brief mention. As director of the State Department's office of international religious freedom, I did not hold the title of ambassador. Moreover, when that office's fine staff briefed Eddy last year, I had already left the State Department.

Writing from Egypt, Ogden agrees that American diplomacy should take religion more seriously, but he is skeptical that Islam is capable of liberal democracy—certainly not the kind that would make Egypt a stable, functioning pluralist democratic state at peace with itself and its neighbors, and no longer a breeding ground for Islamist extremism.

I share Ogden's skepticism, but I am convinced we have little choice but to identify and engage those Islamist groups that are tempted by democracy, such as Egypt's Hizb al-Wasat, a promising offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood. Unless we are prepared for the foreseeable future to send American troops into failing states in order to defeat or forestall Islamist extremism, we had better develop a more effective way to encourage stable, liberal governments in the Middle East. A major problem is, of course, that Iraq has awakened the thirst for democracy in the region, but elections thus far have only empowered Islamist extremists—Hammas, Hezbollah, and, to some extent, the Shiite militias of Muqtada al-Sadr in Iraq. Such developments, plus America's own electoral process, may lead us to seek respite for a season in the "stability"

represented by autocrats like Egypt's Hosni Mubarak and Saudi Arabia's King Abdullah.

A rebirth of "reformed realism" in American foreign policy is perhaps inevitable but will be almost impossible to sustain. We cannot go back to September 10. For better or worse, the forces of electoral democracy have been loosed and are unlikely to be suppressed for long by aging autocratic regimes. Nor will political Islam, as too many American policy makers hope, simply move to the sidelines as we "promote democracy" while ignoring the role of religious communities. That is a dangerous secular conceit.

The hard reality is that Islamists—Muslims who believe Islam has something important to say about public life and are prepared to act on their beliefs—are going to determine the future of the Middle East and of Islamist extremism. We had better identify those Islamist groups capable of liberal Islamic democratic reform and begin now to address the difficult tasks of making our voices heard and of influencing the outcome. The alternatives are simply not acceptable.

Reconsidering ANT-OAR

E. Christian Brugger in the essay "Moral Stem Cells" (May 2006) offers a defense of "altered nuclear transfer-oocyte assisted reprogramming" (ANT-OAR) that must be challenged. From the outset of the essay, I was left uncertain whether the assistant professor of theology actually understands ANT-OAR. The discussion launches by emphasizing the difference between a cell's genetic material and its epigenetic state. The essay then declares, "In the ANT-OAR proposal, before we transferred the somatic cell nucleus into the ooplast, we would preemptively alter its *epigenetic state*" (emphasis mine). Shortly thereafter, we find, "For ANT-OAR ...

genetic material in the nucleus is preemptively altered" (emphasis mine). Which is it, or both?

Brugger observes that, under natural circumstances, cell multiplication by an oocyte does not always yield an embryo, as in the proffered examples of the hydatidiform mole or the teratoma. From this observation, he moves to his definition of the human zygote, namely, an oocyte that initiates multiplication with "the inherent biological disposition for self-directed development toward species maturity (including the capacity to develop all tissue types necessary for a differentiated human body and extra-embryonic supporting materials)." In other words, a human embryo would exist whenever an oocyte containing a diploid nucleus could, if implanted in a human womb, be expected over the course of years to develop into a man or woman capable of reproduction (i.e., "species maturity"). Any creation not meeting this expectation would not be a human zygote.

This definition should not be accepted as an ethical basis for the ANT-OAR route to embryonic stem cells, because "self-directed development toward species maturity" is effectively an undefined term that permits destruction of a broad swath of embryos and presumably of fetuses developing from those "non-human" embryos.

The definition does not prevent willful destruction of some embryos that should certainly be considered human, such as embryos that would develop into human adults lacking "species maturity" due merely to an inability to reproduce the species (because they have been engineered to lack testes or sperm, ovaries, or ova, for example). But it would appear also to permit destruction of embryos that would give rise to infants with a condition that would prove fatal before attainment of "species maturity," for example, an

enzyme deficiency that resulted in death of the organism in infancy or childhood. Unlimited possibilities exist under this definition for the willful creation and destruction of embryos that can be judged not human because their creators have designed them to be incapable of "species maturity" however defined.

Brugger proposes to tell us how "we could produce pluripotent stem cells, functionally identical to embryonic stem cells, without ever needing to create, experiment on, and destroy human embryos." Unfortunately, the essay demonstrates no new technique that might achieve this. Instead, it limps to its goal merely with a redefinition of the human embryo that would permit a practically unlimited range of experimentation. These generalities give such broad range to the investigator that Brugger would likely struggle to describe an embryonic construct whose destruction would be unacceptable. One recent proposal in this arena has been the creation of embryos that cannot form a placenta. In this technique, the embryo develops until it dies because of its engineered inability to develop the placenta by which it could derive the nutrition necessary for its further development. The scientist effectively guarantees that the embryo's feeding tube will never be in place. Does Brugger consider the creation and destruction of an embryo engineered in this fashion to be unethical, or is its destruction ethical because his definition of this deliberately hobbled organism renders it ipso facto not a human embryo?

But Brugger's definition of human vs. nonhuman zygotes has other implications. Once an embryo is labeled nonhuman, what is to prevent its implantation and later abortion for purposes of medical research or treatment? Consider a product of ANT-OAR that Brugger's definition would categorize as nonhuman, a product that will develop into what

otherwise resembles a fetus, except that it is merely pluripotent and therefore nonhuman because, in this case, it lacks the ability to develop lungs that would be functional in a postnatal state. Brugger's ethic would permit us to destroy this organism before it can be implanted in a uterus in order to harvest its stem cells. But the definition would also sanction the destruction of this "nonhuman" creation after uterine implantation in order to harvest its stem cells. Furthermore, since it is "nonhuman," we should not be troubled to have this creation sacrificed for its kidneys or bone marrow later in development. Indeed, we should not be troubled even as we harvest stem cells, kidneys, and bone marrow at term in the minutes after its delivery from what must be called the uterus, not its mother's womb.

The proponents of embryonic stem-cell research in Nebraska have already made clear their approval of the use of even the late-term aborted fetus for medical research and treatment. Similarly, the proposal by Brugger would appear to sanction for the purpose of obtaining stem cells or organs the late-term abortion of a hobbled organism that had been altered (and so merely "pluripotent") so as to allow implantation and normal fetal development until expression of a fatal gene shortly prior to fetal maturity. Indeed, Brugger's definition would appear to countenance the sacrifice of any hobbled creation that had been implanted in a uterus and allowed to develop even to term or past delivery—so long as that organism would have died spontaneously prior to reaching some later point closer to "species maturity," this on the basis that it never was "totipotent" and thus was never human.

Brugger boldly asserts that totipotency in a cell is a necessary and sufficient condition for concluding that that cell is a human embryo. But I have patients who are blind or sterile,

yet who are marvelous human beings. I would be loath to call an embryo nonhuman merely because it lacked the potential to develop functional eyes or reproductive parts. But if such a merely pluripotent construct (unable to develop functional eyes or reproductive parts) is indeed a human embryo that gives rise to a human being, Brugger's "necessary and sufficient condition" would appear voided.

None of us are omnipotent. Limited as we each are to the confines of one sex or the other, we are each of us, at best, "totipotent" in only some strict biologically defined way. Many of us get along while being merely pluripotent, even in Brugger's sense. While Brugger attempts to abet research by defining the humanity out of many an embryo, we need instead research that first divines the humanity of the embryo.

Louis Safranek, M.D., Ph.D.
Omaha, Nebraska

E. Christian Brugger replies:

Many thanks to Louis Safranek for his reply to my brief essay defending ANT-OAR. I emphasize "brief" because much more could be, and has been, published in defense of the procedure than I was unable to allude to because of space limitations.

I agree that the central question concerns the definition of a one-celled human embryo. In my essay, I spoke about a set of biological properties that I said constitute together a necessary and sufficient condition (biologically speaking) for the actualization of human life: To be an embryo, a single-celled entity "must possess the inherent biological disposition for self-directed development toward species maturity." I referred to this set of biological conditions as *totipotency*.

Safranek interprets me as saying, "In other words, a human embryo would exist whenever an oocyte containing a diploid nucleus could, if implanted in a human womb, be

expected over the course of years to develop into a man or a woman capable of reproduction (i.e., 'species maturity')." It is understandable why he interprets me in this way, but I insist that his reformulation is *not* what I meant "in other words." My assertion is based upon the premise that there is a radical distinction between a single-celled human embryo and a pluripotent stem cell. Both are alive; both possess cellular constituents; and if constitutive of and from the same person, both have the same DNA.

How then are they different? They differ in their capacities. An embryo has the capacity to undergo self-directed development to increasingly higher levels of coordinated human life—it is a living human organism. A stem cell has the capacity to divide into multiple instances of its own cell type. Because the embryo's capacity is intrinsic, I referred to it as an "inherent biological disposition," and the disposition is *toward* organized developmental maturity—it is not merely chaotic tissue growth, as with the growth of a tumor.

Asserting a necessary disposition for "self-directed development toward species maturity" is not coextensive with asserting an actual ability to develop to full species maturity. I asserted the disposition as a predicate of an embryo's biological nature. It is like correctly asserting that an embryo has a rational nature, though we know it does not have an actualized rationality, nor do some people ever develop to the point of possessing a brain adequate for rational thought.

A one-celled embryo has and must have an internal capacity for development toward higher levels of maturity. This capacity may actualize for only a brief time or unfold to adulthood. In either case, the progenitor cell is still an embryo. Many privations and harms may prevent the embryo (or later the fetus, newborn, toddler, adolescent, or young adult)

from continuing its development. But if the single cell began with the active potency, it was no less human than you or I.

If, however, a single cell lacks the capacity *ab initio* to direct its own development in the direction of greater maturity, i.e., it never possessed the capacity, never could do anything but divide to produce more of its own kind, then it is reasonable to conclude—even for a theologian—that it is not nor ever was an embryo. This is what ANT-OAR proposes to produce. If through animal experimentation—which is all I or any defender of ANT-OAR presently supports—there is evidence that what's been produced is an embryo, however weak, crippled, and unable to flourish, then we are *firmly* committed to rejecting the procedure for experimentation with human cells.

Presently, no amount of caustic philosophical skepticism can resolve the important question as to the nature of the product of ANT-OAR, only rigorous, ethically informed scientific investigation in higher primates.

Food for Thought

With great anticipation, I delved into Gilbert Meilaender's review essay on *Crunchy Cons*, a new book by Rod Dreher that attempts to articulate an ideology with which I am sympathetic. Meilaender is certainly entitled to critique a book as sharply as he likes, but after reading Dreher's book myself, my suspicions were confirmed that Meilaender's review is misleading. First of all, Meilaender exaggerates the importance of comments in the book that are mentioned in passing; one person's suggestion that life in the suburbs is "boring" is interpreted and repeated in Meilaender's essay as an all-out indictment that everyone (including himself) who does not embrace Crunchy Con ideas is "boring."

Secondly, Meilaender overlooks the lighthearted tone Dreher often employs to express his ideas in a rhetorically winsome manner, and instead chooses to make heavy-handed pronouncements. Take, for example, the reference to Janet Jackson and the collapse of civilization—which, in Dreher's account, is followed by good-hearted laughter and some thoughtful reflection. This becomes an opportunity for Meilaender to pronounce somberly, "Well, a little philosophy is a dangerous thing." What is most ironic, of course, is that Meilaender complains about Dreher's tone, implicitly asserting that he suffers from a contemptuous attitude, when it is really Meilaender's essay that is full of contempt—from the title, "Hold the Granola," to the anecdotal opening of the great time he had at Burger King, to his puzzling insistence that Dreher doesn't know the difference between preferences and ethical choices.

Dreher's whole premise of the book is simply to contemplate how conservatives can conserve the "permanent things" through the everyday choices they make. He questions what he views to be ideological inconsistencies in mainstream conservatism, especially in the context of a free-market society. He does *not* castigate the pleasures Meilaender describes in his opening story of stopping by the Burger King on the way home, but he does question the agribusiness practices in place that currently sustain the fast-food chain and whether or not we can, in good conscience, do business with it. Meilaender, on the other hand, never gives any good reasons why we should do as he himself did—deliberately pass over the topic of food. Instead, he justifies his own position in the language of preference: He had a good time, he liked the food, the little boys with their Chief Wahoo caps were cute.

Dreher's frequent references to the sacrifice involved in adhering to

Crunchy Con ideology hardly constitute the language of preference. It is the language of conviction. If Dreher's convictions are not conservative, how so? How is Meilaender defining conservative? By dismissing Dreher's convictions as "preferences" (and liberal ones, at that), he fails to take the book on its own terms. Dreher has taken great pains, it seems to me, in showing how conserving any tradition requires submission, and—quite brilliantly—he has shown how people who embrace Crunchy Con ideology, yet who are not religious, can often become more religious because of their yearning for tradition. If Dreher really is a prophet, as Meilaender suggests at the end of his review, perhaps his recalcitrance to open his ears to the message of *Crunchy Cons* should have been sufficient cause to give it a more just consideration.

Mignon Sass
Irving, Texas

Gilbert Meilaender's main criticism of Rod Dreher's *Crunchy Cons* is that the author is a snob, or at least a mere aesthete. Let Dreher have his Birkenstocks, his organic home-grown vegetables, and his meat purchased from the farm down the road: Burger King, baseball, and New Balance sneakers are the hallmark of the real heartland conservative. But Meilaender, while reluctantly praising the book, engages in a disingenuous misrepresentation of its real content. It's not about "sorrel soup" vs. the Whopper.

Dreher points the reader to E.F. Schumacher's central reflection that the economics of the West, as much as in the East of old, is "built on philosophically materialist assumptions." Any debate among conservatives about economics must begin by acknowledging that man is not a purely economic being.

This seems to be the assumption within the political discourse of libertarian Republicanism. To a Christian,

pro-life, “organic-food,” home-schooling mother, whose family is happily but barely able to get by, Dreher is one of several voices (including Russell Kirk, Christopher Lasch, and Wendell Berry) that critique Republican conservatism from within a more authentically conservative tradition. This publication deserves to give a book like Dreher’s a fairer consideration. The agrarian argument may be irritating, but it speaks to the heart of a new conservative generation.

Paige Hochschild
Emmitsburg, Maryland

At the beginning of his review of *Crunchy Cons*, Gilbert Meilaender reports on his eating and enjoyment of a Burger King Whopper. It must have given him indigestion. I found his review to be parsimonious rather than generous, dyspeptic rather than understanding.

In my experience of his work, Dreher is a serious and thoughtful young Christian; one of the few who is getting any ink in the mainstream media. In *Crunchy Cons*, he is limning the return of a kind of monastic impulse among some conservatives. A desire for a life of poverty, chastity, and obedience that is lived out not in celibate community but in communities of families who take seriously the lordship of Christ over all of human life.

Dreher is trying to get conservatives and Christians to focus not just on sexual morality and immorality but also on virtue more broadly and deeply understood. To focus not just on the sin of lust but also on the sins of greed, envy, and pride, which are equally deadly to the soul. In this he is surely being faithful to the word of God, which contains more teaching on the blessing, use, and abuse of material possessions than anything else. Dreher is also being faithful to Our Lord, who by choosing to be born in the way he was among the people he was, who by the people he

chose as his friends and the people he chose as his enemies, who by the people he lifted up (the widow with two mites) and the people he confronted (the rich young ruler, the moneychangers in the Temple), showed that our relationship with wealth and the world is determinative in our relationship with him.

The choices we make about money and lifestyle are not, as Meilaender would have it, just a matter of likes and dislikes. In a biblical worldview everything—agriculture, food, city planning, politics—falls under the lordship of Christ. It is sometimes hard to sort this out, but Dreher is honestly trying to, by reporting on Christians who are striving to be faithful to the fullness of the witness of God as they live the whole of their lives. This is wholly admirable, and I can only blame that Whopper for Meilaender’s failure to understand and appreciate it.

Marc Rogers
Fort Worth, Texas

I was disappointed that Gilbert Meilaender chose to offer only the briefest comments on the topic of food in Rod Dreher’s *Crunchy Cons*. More troubling than the brevity of his comments, however, was the fact that he seemed to dismiss Dreher’s notion of “ethically and nutritionally superior food”—organic and locally grown food as opposed to food processed by agribusiness giants—as merely a personal preference. Of course, Meilaender is welcome to disagree with the idea that local, organic foods are indeed “ethically superior,” but what troubles me is that he doesn’t seem to think that food choices are ethically significant. When the number of undernourished people in the world is equal to the number of overweight people (1.1 billion), as it is today, I cannot see that Christians have any choice but to begin to ask serious questions about their own food choices and their global impact.

Since Meilaender mentions eating a slice of Hershey’s Sundae Pie at Burger King, I’ll use chocolate as an example. It is no secret that many cocoa farms on the Ivory Coast (the source of 43 percent of the world’s cocoa) use child slaves for labor—this is information reported by the U.S. State Department, the International Labor Organization, and the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture. The major chocolate producers in the United States have resisted taking any real action to end such abuses. And we, the American consumers, benefit by being able to buy lots of chocolate cheaply. But at what cost to the child slaves of West Africa?

This is but one example, and I’m sure that it can be debated, dismantled, and argued from many different angles. But whether anyone has the answers (I know I don’t), it doesn’t change the fact that there are questions—ethical ones—to be asked and wrestled with and, hopefully, answered, in the realm of food choices. Of course, it’s Meilaender’s personal decision to choose a burger and fries over quinoa and kale. But please don’t suggest that such choices aren’t ethical choices, or that it isn’t necessary to give careful Christian thought to food. What could be more basic to the “ordering of society” than making sure our choices help to contribute to justice for all?

Rachel Stone
Trinity Center, California

The Church’s Purse

Archbishop Chaput’s concerns about the questionable legal and moral merits of removing statute-of-limitation provisions retroactively, so as to enable a further flood of dubious sex-abuse-related lawsuits against the Catholic Church, undoubtedly have merit (“Suing the Church,” May). However, I believe that one must not lose sight of the deeper point: As a matter of faith, the Catholic Church

is much more than the sum of its financial resources and physical assets here on earth. In fact, these are completely accidental to what the Church is, and therefore also entirely dispensable. The essence of the Church (very roughly stated) consists of a body of believers in Christ who are mystically united to the risen Christ as their Head, and to one another through Christ, which mystical union is effected by the ministrations of grace poured forth by the Holy Spirit.

It is worth noting again that the possession of physical and financial assets by the Church in its visible manifestation *in no way enters into this essential definition of what the Church is*. As such, I respectfully submit that the American bishops, as a matter of faith, ought to have relatively little concern over the prospect that all the physical and financial assets of the American Church might be lost due to unscrupulous attempts to reverse statutes of limitation and so on. I also submit that the American bishops could set a powerful example of trust in Christ for the rest of us by publicly entrusting the fate of the visible Church's financial resources and physical assets to the loving providence of the triune God.

Michael Wenisch
Morgan State University
Baltimore, Maryland

Archbishop Chaput replies:

Mr. Wenisch's grasp of essentials is correct but not quite complete. The Church has a mission from her Lord that requires engaging the world. She needs resources to do that.

Moreover, bishops have a duty to protect, steward, and properly use those resources, which flow from the faith of their people. They are not free to abandon those resources to a romantic misreading of Providence. God gives his people a conscience, brain, and spine, and we're expected to use all three.

Stark Assessment

In his review of *Victory of Reason* ("What Hath God Wrought?" April), Algis Valiunas begins by quoting the apostle encouraging Timothy to abjure the material life. Timothy's vocation was to be an itinerant tent-making preacher. Granted, there are lessons for all of us in that letter; but Valiunas (should I say cunningly?) ignores the context and forgets that this epistle was written to an individual, not a congregation. The same lesson is further elucidated in the epistle of Barnabas, describing the appropriate material relationship between the itinerant preacher and his temporary flock.

Valiunas' notion that Max Weber deserves more respect from Stark baffles me. Should Stark have complimented Weber for ignoring a thousand years of history? As for Stark's supposed "cunning silence" about Aquinas' debt to Aristotle, I would think that any casual reader might have noticed that Aquinas does a more than adequate job of making us aware of that himself. Valiunas seems to have missed the entire point that Stark makes, which is that while the Christian religion did not produce a unique philosophy, the synthesis achieved by Christianity produced a culture less inhibited by dualism and the tendency that societies so influenced have toward religious and political (and, consequently, intellectual, educational, and economic) arbitrariness.

It may be that Valiunas' prejudice against Stark's work results from an atavistic longing for an economic morality that is uninformed by reason and thus arbitrary. In his disdain of economic rationality, he disdains rationality itself. The Schoolmen didn't expend miles of parchment discussing economic issues for no reason. They realized that a Christianity overly obsessed with asceticism, the way he seems to be (could this be one of those cases where one

person's involuntary asceticism becomes the model for everyone else?), is a Christianity unable to feed its flock. If all Christians shared this misguided and self-centered view of the world, there wouldn't be a Christianity to discuss. The monks themselves went into trade because subsistence farming leads to privation and starvation, Valiunas' goal for us all.

Greg Walker, M.D.
Bloomington, Indiana

Almost always I have found your articles and book reviews not only insightful but also objective in their analyses. Unfortunately, I found Algis Valiunas' review of *The Victory of Reason* misleading and biased in favor of the reviewer's own religious and, might I say, philosophical views that more closely reflect Eastern Christianity's traditional approach to worldly endeavors.

Having read Rodney Stark's book and some other reviews, I found the book enlightening in its presentation of the evolution of capitalism in the Western world and the influence that Catholic Christianity had on that evolution. That influence is presented as a historical fact, and the book illustrates how Western Catholicism in its application of reason to moral issues developed rationales for improving the well-being of the populace.

Valiunas apparently favors retreat from the world, in contrast to being in the world, which God has created and is "good." A review of Stark's book is hardly the forum to advocate that otherworldly theme in such a preemptory way.

There are a number of inaccuracies in the review that flow from Valiunas' bias. Some are:

Valiunas' assertion that Stark claims that Christian theologians invented reason is not true. The author acknowledges the role of the Greek philosophers, especially Aristotle, in the development of reasoning as a method of analysis. What

Valiunas does not perceive is Stark's position that the Greeks and Romans failed to apply reason to practical economic and scientific problems. For them, reason was a theoretical intellectual exercise and had little to do with practical living, especially in the arenas of economics and technology.

Valiunas says that Stark's position is that liberty, power, and prosperity are the ends and Christianity is the means, and that the author sides with the world and the flesh, which value reason more than faith. Stark nowhere endorses such a position. Rather, I found the author's position to be how faith, aided by reason, in fact communicated with and guided man "to attain goals which render people's lives more worthy."

Valiunas' embellishment of Muslim philosophical accomplishments is unsupported by other authorities, including Bernard Lewis. The philosophies of Averroes and Alfarabi never had a widespread or enduring influence on Muslim culture, and they themselves were on the intellectual fringe of Islamic thought. As Stark points out, the Muslim world did not embrace the supremacy of reason and human equality and freedom. These failures contributed to the failure of the Muslim world to develop economically.

Bernard J. McNamee
Fairview, Texas

Algis Valiunas replies:

It's always amusing to hear the animadversions of those who take offense at what one writes, but never before have I been accused of being an agent of the Eastern Church (like most Lithuanians, I am Roman Catholic), a devotee of the scourge and hairshirt (not even on martyrs' feast days), and an advocate of universal starvation (I would love to live in a world where everyone could eat as well as I do).

My philosophical quarrel with Stark and his defenders has to do with their slighting the greatest achieve-

ments of the ancient Greeks, particularly the achievements of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, who were not merely learned men or scholars, as Stark tendentiously calls them, but the founding fathers of philosophy, which is the effort to understand the world by reason alone. Against the ancient philosophers, Stark exalts the great Catholic theologians and the free-market economists.

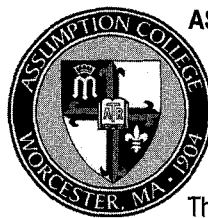
Stark describes Christian theology as the highest form of reasoning—"formal reasoning about God"—and finds the medieval theologians to be better reasoners than Plato and Aristotle. But theology begins by accepting certain unquestionable tenets of faith that unimpeded reason might indeed find questionable. As I pointed out in my review, theologians are not free to think as philosophers are; the Church still punishes heretical theologians. Stark declares that "faith in reason is the most significant feature of Western civilization"; in the activity he considers supreme, however, reason is subordinate to faith. The origins of Western rationality are to be found in fifth-century Athens, not in the medieval Church.

As for the free-market economists, while Adam Smith does pay due attention to the virtue of compassion, their thinking generally has little use for Christianity, although the famous invisible hand is rather more a matter of faith than of reason. And it is absurd to consider Adam Smith a greater thinker than Plato or Aristotle.

My religious quarrel with Stark and his defenders has to do with their apparent belief that the really important achievement of Christianity is the founding of a kingdom very much of this world. When Christ declared that his own kingdom lies elsewhere, he made clear that not even Stark's trinity of "Freedom, Capitalism, and Western Success," however fine it is, however blessed one is to enjoy its comforts, can be compared to the eternal life that matters most.

One ought at least to consider that the words of St. Paul and of Christ himself, however severe they might sound, just might address what is demanded of us to deserve that kingdom more fully than the teachers of economic rationality do.

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OPINION

This Heartbreaking Court

Hadley Arkes

Both sides in the culture war over abortion have been readying themselves for the decision of the Supreme Court this fall on partial-birth abortion. Both sides expect a decision portentous and astounding—for people on both sides seriously expect the Court will use its decision to overturn *Roe v. Wade*.

That is not likely to be the case. An outcome so dramatic is not strictly necessary, and it may not even be prudent. In any event, it seems quite improbable from a Court containing judges as cautious and circumspect as John Roberts and Samuel Alito. The question on which everything else hangs is whether the Court will manage to flip the decision it handed down six years ago in *Stenberg v. Carhart*, in which, with Sandra Day O'Connor providing the deciding vote, the Court overturned the law on partial-birth abortion in Nebraska (and, by inference, in thirty other states).

With O'Connor now replaced, it seems a good bet the Court would overturn that judgment. Whether it will reach the same result with a ban on partial-birth abortion emanating from the *federal* government is a notably different question. Still, if Roberts and Alito help simply to overturn that prior decision on partial-birth abortion, my own judgment is that the regime of *Roe* will have come to its end, even if *Roe* itself is not explicitly overruled. What the Court would be saying in effect is, "We are now in business to consider seriously, and to sustain, many plausible measures that impose real restrictions on abortion."

That would invite a flood of measures enacted by the states. They might be restrictions on abortion after the point of viability, for instance, or even earlier, with the first evidence of a beating heart. Or requirements that abortionists use a method more likely to yield the child alive. Or provisions that ban abortions on a child likely to be afflicted with disabilities, such as Down syndrome.

Each restriction would command the support of about 70 or 80 percent of the country, including many people who describe themselves as pro-choice. And step by step, the public would get used to these cardinal notions: that the freedom to order abortions, like any other kind of freedom, may be subject to plausible restrictions; that it is legitimate for legislatures to enact those restrictions; and that it is, in fact, possible for ordinary folk, with ordinary language, to deliberate about the grounds on which abortions could be said to be justified or unjustified. This seems to me the path far more likely to be taken by justices with the judicial temperament of John Roberts and Samuel Alito.

It may also be the better and more prudent path to take. To overturn *Roe* in one decisive stroke risks setting off a panic among people who have been led to believe that they would be dispossessed, at once, of rights they have come to regard as fundamental. We've lately had the spectacle of people even with college degrees apparently seized with the notion that the overruling of *Roe* would make abortion illegal, overnight, throughout the land. Simply overturning *Stenberg v. Carhart* this fall would avoid that panic and nonetheless mark the beginning of the end of *Roe*.

Even that will not be easy, despite the presence of John Roberts and Samuel Alito. As the drafters of the federal bill sought to get around the objections of the Court, they tried to address two lines of argument in the *Stenberg* case.

First was the charge of vagueness in what they were proscribing. There was nothing, of course, vague about partial-birth abortions, and surgeons did not suffer the least doubt as to when they were doing them. But, as Dr. Carhart earnestly pleaded, his daily work—his ordinary, everyday abortions—involved the dismemberment of a child in the womb and the drawing of severed parts through the birth canal. Every abortion he performed could be called, then, the destruction of a "living fetus" emerging from the womb: Killing live fetuses is exactly what he did for a living with every abortion. There was one of the truths that dare not speak its name: Most of the country recoiled from the horrendous procedure of partial-birth abortion when it was described, but in point of fact it was not more horrendous than the butchering that was commonly taking place with the dismembering of live babies, without anesthetic, in the daily run-of-the-mill practice of abortion.

The second line of argument dealt with the "health exception." The Court, and especially Justice O'Connor, insisted there cannot be a restriction of abortion without such an exception for the pregnant woman. Ample testimony in the hearings demonstrated that

the procedure of partial-birth abortion is never indicated for the purpose of guarding the physical health of the pregnant woman. But, of course, in the way that the Court defined *health*, it typically encompassed mental health—which is to say, an abortion could be ordered up if a doctor certified that his patient would suffer distress in not having one.

No evidence had been presented to Congress or a court showing any case in which a partial-birth abortion had been necessary or even safer as a procedure. Nevertheless, Justice Breyer was willing to strike down the bill simply because it was *conceivable* that this procedure, in certain instances, might be safer: No parts of the fetus would be left behind in the body, where they could cause infections. But by this reckoning, the safer procedure by far would be the “live-birth abortion,” as practiced in Christ Hospital, in Oak Lawn, Illinois, and other hospitals: A child is simply delivered whole and put aside, in another room, to die.

Justice Scalia aptly rejoined, in the *Stenberg* case, that grafting a health exception on to this kind of bill was a requirement that extinguished the bill itself: “The Court must know (as most state legislatures banning this procedure have concluded) that demanding a ‘health exception’—which requires the abortionist to assure himself that, in his expert medical judgment, this method is, in the case at hand, marginally safer than others (how can one prove the contrary beyond a reasonable doubt?)—is to give live-birth abortion free rein.”

There had been ample testimony in the congressional hearings, from fetologists and doctors who performed abortions, that no affliction faced by a pregnant woman would be remedied by a partial-birth abortion. Congress revisited those hearings in order to meet the concerns of the Court. With its own reading of the record and its own assessment of the evidence, the Congress then declared, “There exists substantial record evidence upon which Congress has reached its conclusion that a ban on partial-birth abortion is not required to contain a ‘health’ exception, because the facts indicate that a partial-birth abortion is never necessary to preserve the health of a woman, poses serious risks to a woman’s health, and lies outside the standard of medical care.”

But by the time the bill on partial-birth abortion was presented for the third time, the opposition had lined up its own array of professionals, ready to affirm the safety, value, and redeeming goodness of partial-birth abortions. And so, there were statements duly offered in opposition to the act from the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists and a cluster of groups with an evident political coloration,

allied to governments or to advocacy groups: the American Public Health Association, the California Medical Association, the Association of Reproductive Health Professionals.

Judge Richard Conway Casey, considering the constitutionality of the bill in the district court in New York, offered a scrupulous review of the testimony, and he acknowledged that the defenders of partial-birth abortion were never actually able to bring forth evidence to show that the procedure was necessary because it was demonstrably safer than any alternative form of abortion.

As Casey summed up his judgment, in language not at all shaded, many of the “purported reasons” offered in support of the medical necessity of the procedure were simply not credible; “rather they [were] theoretical or false.” In no case, he said, involving “maternal health conditions” could the professionals opposing the bill “point to a specific patient or actual circumstances in which D&X [dilation and extraction, or partial-birth abortion] was necessary to protect a woman’s health.”

And yet the problem, as Judge Casey understood, was that the Supreme Court had altered the frame of the question: What was involved now was something regarded as the “fundamental right” of a woman to choose abortion. And against that right, a legislature had to bear a heavy burden of proof. He was constrained by the guidelines of the Supreme Court, but he made use of his powers of trial to put on the public record one of the most detailed accounts of the facts that describe the procedure of partial-birth abortion and revealed the character of the people who would make this kind of killing their office work. While Casey was prepared to do his judicial duty and overturn the ban, he allowed himself the observation that “medical science and ideology are no more happy companions than *Roe* and its progeny have shown law and ideology to be.”

In the first footnote of his fastidious opinion, Casey pointed out the dog that was not barking. The opponents of the bill, he noted, “do not allege that Congress exceeded its authority under the Commerce Clause” of the Constitution. There is the ingredient that complicates this case for conservative judges. That a state may bar private clinics and doctors from performing surgeries it regards as wrongful is a matter that comes presumptively within the traditional reach of police powers: the traditional authority of state and local governments to act for the “health, welfare, and morals” of the people within their reach. But for the federal government, a government supposedly of enumerated powers, it has not been so clear as to

how that government can reach directly to private clinics, private clubs, private businesses. Since the New Deal, that matter has been finessed, though never satisfactorily explained or justified, by using the Commerce Clause of the Constitution. Conservatives bite their lips when they invoke the Commerce Clause, but for the most part they too have had to absorb the precedents set in place since the New Deal. And so, when the bill on partial-birth abortion was introduced in 1995, the drafters directed the bill to “any physician who, in or affecting interstate or foreign commerce, knowingly performs a partial-birth abortion and thereby kills a human fetus.”

But what seemed to go unnoticed for a long while was that, in the same year, the conservatives on the Supreme Court started taking some modest steps in placing limits on the Commerce Clause. In *U.S. v. Lopez*, the Court overturned the federal bill that barred the use of guns near schools. The liberals on the Court were willing to reason along with the reigning fictions: In this case, that violence near the schools could impair the performance of students and render them less able to take their part in a national and global economy.

But as Chief Justice Rehnquist observed, the performance of children in the schools was demonstrably likely to be affected by the breakup of their families. Did that mean that the federal government could take over the laws on marriage and the family in the states, or perhaps even take over the local schools altogether? As pro-lifers concentrated on the bill on partial-birth abortion, they seemed to forget that it was still cast in terms of the Commerce Clause. The bill, in that form, could have trouble in commanding uniform support from the conservative justices. With O'Connor replaced by Samuel Alito, there is now a potential majority in support of the bill on partial-birth abortion—if the question of the Commerce Clause does not prove unsettling. And the loss of one vote would be the loss of the case.

I had raised this issue in a meeting of lawyers, and a friend who had clerked for Justice Scalia reminded us of how limited the holding in the *Lopez* case had been. The reach of the federal government under the Commerce Clause would be vast, but it has to be confined to “commerce” or to activities that were “economic” in character. In other words, for Scalia and Rehnquist, it would have been an entirely different matter if the federal government had sought to bar the sale of guns near schools. That, apparently, they would have felt obliged to sustain. Scalia's former clerk pointed out that the bill on partial-birth abortion would pose no problem as long as there was a transac-

tion—as long as someone paid for the service of performing the abortion. For most of the judges, that may be true. But not for all. Most notably, not for Clarence Thomas. When his colleagues started their cautious scaling down of the Commerce Clause in *Lopez*, Thomas thought the change so modest, so pusillanimous, as to be unserious. He wrote a separate, concurring opinion, arguing for a return to the wholesome discipline and constraints that came with the Commerce Clause as traditionally understood, before the New Deal dissolved any plausible sense of boundaries.

Thomas was alone, even among the conservative jurists. But he had articulated his position in one of the most notable essays in his years on the Court, and that argument, put forth so earnestly, had to come into play if the bill on partial-birth abortion were litigated under the Commerce Clause. For Thomas would be under immense personal pressure to show that he did indeed respect the doctrine of jurisprudence he had put forth. And in the style of conservative jurisprudence, the demonstration would be all the more exquisite when he shows people that he would honor his doctrine even when it prevented him from reaching a decision in the case at hand that he devoutly wished to reach. For the pro-life cause, the loss of this vote would be momentous: If the federal bill on partial-birth abortion were struck down, no one would expend the political capital to try, for a fourth time, to revise that bill and present it for hearings yet again. That particular measure by itself may not be overly important, but the dramatic loss in the Court could be widely demoralizing.

Here the matter sits, with a question mark for Clarence Thomas. Some of us in the pro-life ranks have sought to make an argument that runs back to the axioms of the Constitution and the separation of powers. It involves a slight reworking of an argument offered by Chief Justice Marshall in *Cohens v. Virginia* (1821), and it may be condensed in this way: If the Supreme Court can articulate new rights under the Constitution—if it can find, in the Fourteenth Amendment, the right to an abortion—then the legislative branch must be able to act on the same clause in the Constitution in vindicating those same rights. And in filling them out, it may also mark their limits. Congress could plausibly say, for example, that whatever was established in *Roe v. Wade*, a right to abortion could never be taken to mean a freedom to kill a child at the very point of birth. What cannot be tenable, under the logic of this Constitution, is that the Court can articulate new rights—and then assign to itself a monopoly of the legislative power in shaping those rights.

If Justice Thomas were willing to join a majority containing Scalia, Kennedy, Roberts, and Alito, the federal bill could be sustained, and the decision in *Stenberg* flipped. That, I think, would signal the end of the regime of *Roe v. Wade* even if the Court does not pronounce that “super-duper precedent” overruled. And yet, a Court containing jurists of the temperament of Roberts and Alito may choose to decide in this case in a manner even more delicate and restrained, even more in keeping with the discipline of judging that conservatives keep touting.

The key is the *other* dog that didn’t bark, the dog that remained silent during the oral argument six years ago in the *Stenberg* case. The case offered Justice O’Connor a chance to strike a conservative posture because the case had arisen as a “facial challenge.” The aim of the law was to protect children from a hideous procedure, puncturing their skulls at the point of birth. Dr. Carhart professed to fear that the law could be used against him for abortions performed much earlier. But it made no sense to presume that the people who framed the law, or those who enforced it, would act in such an incontinent way, paying no heed to the purpose and guidelines of the law. The truly conservative reflex would have been to withhold judgment and *wait for a real case*: Let us gauge the intentions and understanding of the authorities by waiting to see just how, in fact, they choose to enforce the law. O’Connor could have written for a conservative majority in declining to decide the case.

But in the course of the oral argument, that concern was never sounded by Justice O’Connor, and I took it as a telling sign of how the case would come out. In declining to take that conservative path, O’Connor and her colleagues were, in effect, rendering an advisory opinion, and they were abandoning the rule contained in their own 1987 precedent in *U.S. v. Salerno*, where the Court had acknowledged that “facial challenges” must be accepted only rarely, because they involve the risk of exceeding those boundaries that confine the power of the judges.

The understanding was that a law may be struck down on its face only when there was no conceivable or imaginable set of circumstances in which the law could be constitutional. But with cases on abortion, the situation has now been inverted: The Court seems to begin with the premise that any law restricting abortion is presumptively invalid, and the legislation could be declared unconstitutional on its face if there were any conceivable circumstances in which it might be unconstitutional. Judge Frank Easterbrook in the Seventh Circuit expressed the perplexity of judges trying to discern the law they are expected to follow:

“When the Justices themselves disregard rather than overrule a decision—as the majority did in *Stenberg*, and the plurality did in *Casey*—they put courts of appeals in a pickle. We cannot follow *Salerno* without departing from the approach taken in both *Stenberg* and *Casey*; yet we cannot disregard *Salerno* without departing from the principle that only an express overruling relieves an inferior court of the duty to follow decisions on the books.”

What has happened to that vaunted “respect for precedent,” of which we heard so much in the hearings on Roberts and Alito? Chief Judge Walker observed in the appellate court in New York that even if Congress barred that grisly procedure known as partial-birth abortion, there would be a safe, alternative procedure available for any woman who wanted an abortion. And yet, under the *Stenberg* case, the lower courts were obliged to strike down any bill on partial-birth abortion out of a *speculation* that the procedure might, just *might*, be useful to someone. Judge Walker took the shift here as profoundly serious: In the understanding long settled, the courts need to wait for a real case in controversy, and while the judges hold back their hands, power is left in hands other than their own. In Walker’s reckoning, the performance of the Court here was tantamount to the Court itself evading the boundaries to its own power and the restraints of the Constitution.

A Court headed by John Roberts may simply install the rule from the *Salerno* case and send all of the pending cases back to be tried again. Under that rule, the law on partial-birth abortion may be harder to strike down. But the judges in the lower courts, ever resourceful, ever willing to contrive new arguments, will find other reasons for striking it down. The matter will come back again, and again.

All of that quite suits the temper of conservative judges, who may be disinclined to take any step that is not strictly necessary. But in this path now lies evasion and debility. My hope is that the Court, with Roberts and Alito, will do more—that it will move decisively to sustain the bill on partial-birth abortion. But it has been confirmed now, in the circles of conservatives, that judges will show their fitness as judges by honoring a notion of law utterly detached from substantive judgments of right and wrong. The voters who have backed two Bushes and Reagan, expecting something dramatically different, may discover once again that the judicial world is fixed in a mold that will persistently break their hearts.

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Main Currents of Kolakowski

Zbigniew Janowski

Few contemporary philosophers have works considered important by non-academics. Their intellectual pursuits, important as they are in their own right, have little impact outside academia, let alone are they deemed politically dangerous. But Polish philosopher Leszek Kolakowski is just such a philosopher. Three years ago, he was awarded the first Kluge Prize—created by the Library of Congress as the American counterpart to the Nobel Prize—for life-long achievements in the human sciences, a distinction that was both timely and well deserved.

The seventy-nine-year-old Kolakowski is the author of more than thirty books on topics as varied as Marxism, seventeenth-century thought, philosophy of religion, Bergson, and Pascal. He is also the translator of seventeenth-century philosophical writings and author of several collections of essays—the genre of writing for which he received the European Prize for the Essay. Among the most distinguished American awards that form part of Kolakowski's collection: the Jefferson Award, the MacArthur Prize, and, of course, the Kluge Prize. But the list of prestigious European awards is no less impressive: the Erasmus Prize, Prix Européen d'Essai, and Die Friedenspreis des Deutschen Buchhandels.

Born in 1927 in Radom, Poland, Kolakowski joined the Polish Communist party after World War II. His youthful fascination with Marxism did not, however, last long. Disillusioned with the primitivism of the official state ideology and the practice of real socialism, Kolakowski began drifting away from communism after the 1956 "October thaw." Many of his writings from 1956 to 1966, including the influential essay "Karl Marx and the Classical Definition of Truth," drew the attention of the state authorities and led to his expulsion from the editorship of *Studia Filozoficzne*.

The movement in which Kolakowski became the most original voice made Khrushchev, the first secretary of the Soviet Communist party, insist that communist leaders from the "satellite republics" organize an international trial of the "revisionists"—Kolakowski being the main culprit among them. Luckily for the revisionists, Wladyslaw Gomulka, the communist leader of Poland, did not succumb to Khrushchev's demand. He did, however, join the ranks of Kolakow-

ski's critics, attacking him publicly as "the main ideologue of the so-called revisionist movement." In 1968 Kolakowski delivered a famous speech on the situation of Polish culture; after this he found himself out of a job, removed from the editorial boards of a number of publishing houses, and stripped of all his scholarly titles "for forming the views of the youth in a position glaringly contrary to the dominant tendency of the country." His writings were put on the index of forbidden authors, and none of his publications could be cited or even referred to in Poland during the entire pre-Solidarity period (1968–1980).

The Western Left subscribed to Kolakowski's revisionist ideas, seeing in them the hope for "socialism with a human face," of which the political practice in the countries of real socialism was believed to be merely a distortion. But the October thaw did not last long. Ten years later, it became all too obvious to the revisionists that the promises made by the party leaders in 1956 were empty. Young Polish Marxists woke up from their revisionist dream in 1968 jobless; several of them were expelled from their posts at the University of Warsaw and had to seek employment in the West. Kolakowski became probably the best known of them. He was professor of philosophy at McGill, then Berkeley, and eventually found his permanent post at All Souls College, Oxford (1971), and at the University of Chicago (1981), where he taught until his retirement.

If, as a revisionist Marxist, Kolakowski was dangerous for the communist authorities, after his arrival in the West in 1968 he became troublesome for his leftist admirers. The German philosopher Jürgen Habermas remarked: "Kolakowski is a catastrophe for the Western European Left." Having little or no knowledge of his personal peregrinations in 1966 and 1968, they were unaware of Kolakowski's departure from Marxism. Kolakowski laid out his reasons in his famous "My Correct Views on Everything" (1973), a rejoinder to the distinguished English historian E.P. Thompson's hundred-page "An Open Letter to Leszek Kolakowski," published a year earlier in the *Socialist Register*.

Far from having politically correct views on everything—an intellectual trait displayed by Thompson in his letter, who still in 1972 believed socialism to be a panacea for the ills of capitalism—Kolakowski explained to Thompson that he no longer cherished any hope for socialism. Stalinism, he argued, is not a distortion of Marx's thought; it is a legitimate offshoot of it. The socialist idea was dead for Kolakowski, and no "socialism with a human face" could be hoped for. Paraphrasing Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Kolakowski ended his sarcastic rejoinder by saying: "Alas, poor idea. I knew it, Edward. This skull will never smile again."

If Habermas perceived Kolakowski's activities of the early 1970s as a reason to see a coming catastrophe, the publication of Kolakowski's *Main Currents of Marxism* in 1976 must have presented itself as a vision of doomsday. *Main Currents of Marxism* is an intellectual "death certificate" of Marxist thought written thirteen years before the actual burial of communism in 1989. In this elegantly written work, Kolakowski traces the roots of Marxism to the tradition of European dialectics that goes back to Neoplatonism. He describes Marxism as twentieth-century man's greatest fantasy: It promised utopia—a classless society without greed. What it brought about instead was the most oppressive political system ever known, based on total state ownership of all its citizens.

Despite the Left's fears that Kolakowski's anti-communism provided ammunition for the Right, Kolakowski never truly became a conservative. His present attitude is probably best expressed in two articles published in his new collection, *My Correct Views on Everything*. In "What Is Left of Socialism," Kolakowski defines socialism as a set of slogans that "were supposed to justify and glorify communism and the slavery that inevitably goes with it"; however, insofar as socialism was the utopian expression of solidarity with the "underdogs," it stood for "social justice."

The notion of social justice has been criticized by economists such as F.A. Hayek. Kolakowski does not deny the economic validity of such criticism but rejects Hayek's conclusion that social justice is a useless notion. In his typically contrarian style, Kolakowski writes: "In its vagueness, 'social justice' resembles the concept of human dignity. It is difficult to define what human dignity is. It is not an organ to be discovered in our body, it is not an empirical notion, but without it we would be unable to answer the simple question: what is wrong with slavery?" In "Where Are Children in Liberal Philosophy?" he argues that the consistent notion of the minimum liberal state is in danger of not being able to sustain the liberal state. Perfect neutrality of the state, which liberal ideology requires, is incapable of generating values that could foster public virtues to sustain the *res publica*. Those virtues must be inculcated—a position inconsistent with the liberal mindset.

The political turmoil in the 1960s helped Kolakowski's international reputation—first, as a revisionist Marxist philosopher from behind the Iron Curtain, and later as a leading critic of communism. Yet Kolakowski has never been solely a scholar of Marxism. He launched his academic career with a work on Spinoza, *The Individual and Infinity: Freedom and the Antinomies of Freedom in the Philosophy of Spinoza*

(1958), in which he aimed to extract "humanistic content" from the European religious tradition and see the whole of it, minus the Greeks, as hiding the same message under different religious garments.

The book on Spinoza was followed by the publication of a massive study of non-confessional Christianity in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Europe, *Religious Consciousness and Confessional Link* (1962). The book, translated into French under the telling title *Chrétiens sans Eglise (Christians Without a Church)*, is concerned with the post-Reformation period in European religiosity and philosophy. Despite its length (824 dense pages in French translation) and heavyweight scholarship, the book has become a classic among French, Dutch, and Italian scholars of seventeenth-century thought.

Kolakowski's critics were often puzzled by his interest in religion, but the book is more than a work in a neglected field of the history of religious ideas (most of the sources Kolakowski analyzes were available only in Dutch and Latin in their original seventeenth-century editions). *Christians Without a Church* was perceived as a model for non-confessional (revisionist) Marxism similar to non-confessional Christianity. Accordingly, one could claim to be a Marxist without supporting the communist state, just as one could claim to be a Christian without belonging to the church. Not without reason was Kolakowski once described as "Ein Christlich ohne Kirche, ein Kommunist ohne Partei" (a Christian without a church, a Marxist without a party).

The young Kolakowski might have believed that revisionist Marxism could save the true Marxist message from its distortions at the hands of the official state apparatchiks and, by analogy, that non-confessional Christianity offered a model of an intellectual position one could assume for the communist state. Yet the validity of the parallel between denominational Christianity and Marxism was false and naive: False, because Stalinism, as Kolakowski himself argues in "Marxist Roots of Stalinism," was not a distortion of Marxism but a legitimate version of it; and naive because "individual revelations"—be they mystical or revisionist—prove perilous to earthly organizations. As Kolakowski's own example shows, his revisionist ideas became corrosive for the states behind the Iron Curtain. Their influence in the countries of the former Soviet empire, where his writings circulated in countless editions in a samizdat form, cannot be overestimated when calculating the loss of faith in Marxism.

Although Kolakowski devoted his most scholarly writings to Protestant Christianity, and he himself may forever remain a "Christian without a church," his cultural background and religious sympathies are Roman

Catholic. The subject of his book on Pascal, *God Owes Us Nothing* (1992), is the theological battle between the Jansenists and the Jesuits in the seventeenth-century Catholic Church. He rejoices in the fact that the semi-Pelagian (Jesuit) form of Christianity won against the rigidity of Jansenist theology, not because the Jansenists were wrong but because only the Jesuits could save the Catholic Church from being reduced, as would inevitably have happened with the Jansenists, to a small sect.

Kolakowski's writings on religion are much more personal than the writings of most philosophy professors. For this very reason, however, they are also more exciting to read. In *Religion: If There Is No God* (1980), he takes his reader on a personal trip through most of the "pro and con" arguments for the existence of God to show that the act of faith is a moral, not a logical, commitment and that therefore there are no compelling logical reasons to abandon belief in God in the face of evil. For Kolakowski, who spent his teenage years in German-occupied Poland and who witnessed the destruction of the Warsaw Ghetto, the existence of evil was no theoretical construct. In following a French theologian, he says, "I can understand people who do not believe in God, but the fact that there are people who do not believe in the devil is beyond my comprehension." It should therefore not be surprising to see on the list of Kolakowski's publications titles such as *The Key to Heaven*, *Conversations with the Devil*, "Can the Devil be Saved?," "The Devil and Politics," or "A Stenographic Report of the Devil's Metaphysical Press Conference in Warsaw, on the 20th of December, 1963."

Kolakowski has often been described as the most perceptive critic of totalitarianism. One needs to note, however, that his criticism goes beyond the anatomy of communist totalitarianism. He has also written on totalitarian Nazism (in "Genocide and Ideology" and in "A Short Comment on Heidegger's Comment on Nietzsche's Comment on the Power of Negativity"), and on a number of occasions he has expressed concerns about the dangers of democratic totalitarianism. The Nazi and Marxist forms of totalitarianism may be gone for good, but its watered-down incarnations, such as political correctness, are very much alive. It would be naive to believe that liberal democracy may not become totalitarian.

In his "Where Are Children in Liberal Philosophy," Kolakowski is very clear that liberal principles may be turned against themselves. "Liberal states dis-

play an obsessive tendency to legislate, in minute detail, about every aspect and variety of human relations. . . . The more laws and regulations are needed, . . . the more and more repressive" the liberal state becomes. This tendency is the result of the weakening of the common culture and the agreement on what common religious, traditional, and historical values should obtain to regulate human behavior.

No one who has experienced the ideological indoctrination that took place under communism can fail to be horrified at the extent to which life in present-day America—intrusion of the state into the private realm, the use of language, the ideologization of education—is reminiscent of life under communism. In many respects, the ideological pressure of political correctness has already achieved more than the communists could hope for. As Kolakowski put it, "Should the 'ideologization' of universities in that spirit prevail, we might find ourselves longing for the good old days of universities ruled by the obligatory Marxist ideology, with its formal rules of historical correctness and truth." Yet there does not seem to be any democratic "revisionist" movement under way. I do not mean there are no critics of political correctness; they do exist. But insofar as the criticism of communism by former believers was fundamental in bringing it down, there are no signs of it here. No sound of breast-beating can be heard from the former heralds of political correctness, who, even if they realize the extent of the damage they have done, display no signs of remorse.

On a few occasions, with true humility and frankness, Kolakowski does explain his own past commitments. "My strong impression is that in the early postwar years, committed communists . . . in Poland were intellectually less corrupt but more cynical than was the case in other countries. By 'cynical' . . . [I mean] they knew that what the Party wanted to convey to the 'masses' was a pure lie, but they accepted and sanctioned it for the sake of the future blessings of the socialist community." This is an admirable intellectual and moral trait in someone who gave intellectual support to Marxism as a young man. It appears to me that today's intellectuals lack not only the moral courage but also the intellectual caliber characteristic of the former Marxists. They lack what Leszek Kolakowski could teach them.

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That They May Have Life

A Statement of Evangelicals and Catholics Together

I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly. John 10:10

I
We are grateful that as Christians, Evangelicals and Catholics together, we can speak with one voice on a matter of paramount urgency for our society and the world. We address this statement to all who confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and to all people of goodwill who share our concern for a more just and humane social order.

Recent years have witnessed a new pattern of convergence and cooperation between Evangelicals and Catholics. We are grateful that the project known as “Evangelicals and Catholics Together” (ECT) has played a part in this development—a development that has occasioned both controversy and high hopes within our respective communities. In the public life of our country, the changing relationship between Evangelicals and Catholics has also occasioned curiosity, anxiety, and even alarm.

This convergence has implications for our culture and civil order. In the present statement we intend, however briefly and inadequately, to make the case for what is commonly called “a culture of life”—and to do so in a way that invites public deliberation and engages questions of public policy. Our primary purpose, however, is to explain to our communities why we believe that support for a culture of life is an integral part of Christian faith and therefore a morally unavoidable imperative of Christian discipleship.

To those who do not identify with our communities, or with any Christian community, we respectfully suggest that it is in our mutual interest that they try to understand better the reasons and convictions that have recruited so many millions of their fellow citizens to the cause of the culture of life. Greater understanding does not necessarily lead to agreement, but it at least makes possible a more civil engagement of our disagreements.

The present moment in American public life is frequently described in terms of “culture wars,” and there is some merit in that description. We need not and must not, however, resign ourselves to unremitting warfare. A culture is composed of many parts, but different cultures are distinguished by different understandings of reality, of the meaning of life and death, of rights and duties, of rights and wrongs.

There is what is called a Judeo-Christian worldview, a worldview that was crucial to the formation of our civilization and is, we believe, clearly reflected in the convictions that inspired the American founding. To speak of American culture today is to speak of a culture marked by different worldviews in conflict. So severe is the conflict, also in the political realm, that many despair of finding any commonalities by which warfare can be replaced, or at least tempered, by civil discourse. We refuse to join in that despair.

We refuse to despair because we share with those who oppose us a common humanity. We also share a common interest in sustaining the American experi-

ment in its aspiration to be a free, just, and virtuous society. In our common humanity, we share a God-given capacity to reason, to argue, to deliberate, to persuade, and to discover moral truths regarding questions related to the right ordering of our life together. As members of the community of Christians, we are obliged to bear an uncompromising witness to our faith. As members of this civil order, we are also obliged to engage respectfully those who do not share our faith. In this statement, we intend to do both.

Between Evangelicals and Catholics there have been long-standing differences on the capacities of human reason. To put it too briefly, Evangelicals (and the Protestant traditions more generally) have accentuated that human reason has been deeply corrupted by sin. Catholics, on the other hand, while recognizing that human reason has been severely wounded by sin and is in need of healing, have held a higher estimate of reason's capacity to discern truth, including moral truth. We, as Evangelicals and Catholics together, affirm that the knowledge of God necessary for eternal salvation cannot be attained by human reason alone apart from Divine revelation and the Holy Spirit's gift of faith's response to Jesus Christ the only Savior. (These questions are addressed in more detail in our 1998 statement, "The Gift of Salvation.")

We also affirm together that human reason, despite the consequences of sin, has the capacity for discerning, deliberating, and deciding the questions pertinent to the civil order. Some Evangelicals attribute this capacity of reason to "common grace," as distinct from "saving grace." Catholics typically speak of the "natural law," meaning moral law that is knowable in principle by all human beings, even if it is denied by many (Romans 1 and 2). Thus do we, as Evangelicals and Catholics together, firmly reject the claim that disagreements over the culture of life represent a conflict between faith and reason. Both faith and reason are the gift of the one God. Since all truth has its source in Him, all truth is ultimately one, although our human perception of the fullness of truth is partial and inadequate (1 Corinthians 13:12). Thus do we invite those who disagree, including those who do not share the gift of faith in Christ, to join with us in attempting to move beyond "culture wars" to a reasonable deliberation of the right ordering of our life together.

As Christians, we are informed, inspired, and sustained by our faith in a commitment to a culture of life, which includes the protection and care of the unborn, the severely disabled, the dependent elderly, and the dying. The culture of life encompasses also the poor, the marginalized, and those who, for whatever reason,

are vulnerable to neglect or exploitation by others. This is not a uniquely Christian commitment. Disagreement on our obligations to those in need should not be viewed as a conflict between Christians and non-Christians.

We are sadly aware that many who identify themselves as Christians do not share our understanding of a culture of life. It is not the case that we wish to "impose" our moral convictions on our fellow citizens or, as some recklessly charge, to establish a "theocracy." Our intention is not to impose but to propose, educate, and persuade, in the hope that, through free deliberation and decision, our society will be turned toward a more consistent respect for the inestimable gift that is human life.

This statement and the questions addressed are emphatically public in nature. Christianity—its scriptures, doctrine, intellectual tradition, and institutions of communal allegiance and mission—are part of our common history. Christianity claims at least the nominal adherence of the great majority in our society. To be a Christian is a personal but not a private decision. To be a Christian is to be associated with a historical movement bearing public witness to universal moral truths.

Such truths are not accepted by all in our society, nor is there complete agreement about their meaning and implications among all who do accept them. But the assertion of these truths, including their significance for public policy, is part of, and in no way to be excluded from, genuinely public discourse. Whatever is meant by "the separation of church and state," it cannot mean the separation of public life and public policy from the deepest convictions, including moral convictions, of the great majority of a nation's citizens.

As Christian truth claims are public, so also are the questions pertinent to a culture of life. There is no more inescapably public and political question than who belongs to the *polis* of which we are part. The contention over abortion, for instance, is not about when human life begins. That is a biological and medical question about which there is no reasonable dispute. The moral and political dispute is over which human beings, at whatever state of development or decline, possess rights that we are bound to respect. The question is this: Who belongs to the community for which we accept public responsibility?

In what follows we hope to make the case that the defense of the *humanum* is made imperative by the Christian understanding of reality. Our position with respect to questions such as abortion, euthanasia, assisted suicide, and the creation and destruction of

embryos for research purposes is integral to that understanding of reality. Every human life is, from conception, created by God and is infinitely precious in His sight. The fulfillment of human life is, by the grace of God, "life and life abundant" through faith in Jesus Christ, who said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6).

We believe it is of utmost importance that everyone involved in the public discussion of these questions understand the unbreakable connection between a Christian worldview and the defense of human life. We can no more abandon our contention for a culture of life than we can abandon our allegiance to the lordship of Christ, for our contention is inseparably part of that allegiance.

At the same time, we contend that the public policies pertinent to the defense of the *humanum* are supported by reasons that are accessible to all and should be convincing to all. The term "humanism" is frequently employed in opposition to Christian faith, as in the phrase "secular humanism." We propose a deeper and richer humanism that is firmly grounded in the bedrock of scriptural truth, that is elaborated in the history of Christian thought, that is in accord with clear reason, that honors the best in our civilization's tradition, and that holds the promise of a future more worthy of the dignity of the human person who is the object of God's infinite love and care. This more authentic humanism is in no way alien to Christianity. There is in world history no teaching more radically humanistic than the claim that God became a human being in order that human beings might participate in the life of God, now and forever.

II

Our contention for a culture of life is made possible and imperative by the gospel of life. The word *gospel* is used in different ways. Gospel (from the Greek *euangelion*) means "good news." The Apostle Paul writes: "Now I would remind you, brethren, in what terms I preached to you the gospel, which you received, in which you stand, by which you are saved, if you hold it fast—unless you believed in vain" (1 Corinthians 15:1–2). The good news is centered in Jesus Christ—his birth, teaching, healing ministry, holiness of life, redemptive suffering and death, his resurrection victory over sin and death, his present reign, his abiding presence with his disciples, and his promised coming in glory to restore all things to God. "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation"

(2 Corinthians 5:19). The good news is that, despite all the evil for which we human beings are responsible, "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God sent the Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him" (John 3:16–17).

The gospel of life includes the very creation. All that exists is brought into being and sustained in being by love and for love, for "God is love" (1 John 4:8). The whole of creation is a gift and constitutes an order graced by the love of God. In that same love, God bestowed upon humanity a unique dignity. "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it'" (Genesis 1:27–28). Of life in all its created forms we are told, "And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good" (Genesis 1:31).

God did not recant that judgment even when man turned against God and, as a consequence, against his brother. To Cain, the first murderer, God says, "The voice of your brother's blood is crying to me from the ground" (Genesis 4:10). The cry of innocent blood did not go unheeded but began the long gospel story of restoration, including the covenant with Abraham and the people of Israel that prophetically points toward the culmination of God's self-revelation and redemptive work in Jesus Christ. Thus humanity is called "to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks more graciously than the blood of Abel" (Hebrews 12:24). In Christ the dignity and eternal destiny of humanity is restored. St. Paul declares, "For as by a man came death, by man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Corinthians 15:21–22).

The radical humanism of Christianity was and is a new thing in history. Irenaeus, the second-century Church Father, declared, "The glory of God is man fully alive." From the earliest noncanonical Christian writing, the *Didache* (probably written in the latter half of the first century), we learn how Christians confronted the pagan culture of the time:

There are two ways, a way of life and a way of death; there is a great difference between them. . . . In accordance with the precept of the teaching "You shall not kill," you shall not put a child to death by abortion or kill it once it is born. . . . The way of death is this: They show no compassion for the poor; they do not suffer

with the suffering, they do not acknowledge their Creator, they kill their children and by abortion cause God's creatures to perish; they drive away the needy, oppress the suffering, they are advocates of the rich and unjust judges of the poor; they are filled with every sin. May you be ever guiltless of all these sins!

There are many ways in which the dignity of the human person, created in the image and likeness of God, is violated. Both historically and at present there is genocide, unjust war, innocent victims of just wars, economic exploitation, the neglect and abuse of children, the disrespect and mistreatment of women, the abandonment of the aged, racial oppression and discrimination, the persecution of religious believers, and religious and ideological fanaticisms that are the declared enemies of freedom. The depressing list goes on and on. We have no delusions that such evils will be entirely eliminated before Christ returns in glory to set all things right. But, as in the apostolic era, so also in our time, Christian witness and life is to stand in clear contrast and opposition to such evils, for we are called to be "the salt of the earth" and "the light of the world" (Matthew 5:13-14).

While we cannot remedy all the evils in the world, we can—if we are prepared to suffer and even die rather than to do evil—always refuse to willingly participate in, support, or condone the doing of evil. The way of the gospel of life is in the keeping of God's commandments, which are summarized in this: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your strength, and all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself." Jesus said, "Do this and you will live" (Luke 10:28).

The love of neighbor takes many forms. In Matthew 25 the righteous are rewarded and the wicked condemned by the measures of whether they fed the hungry, gave drink to the thirsty, welcomed the stranger, clothed the naked, and visited those who are sick or in prison. By these and other measures of love for our neighbor, we all fall short. Love for the neighbor begins, however, with respect for the neighbor's right to be, by honoring the gift of God that is the neighbor's life. Thus the most basic commandment of neighbor-love is "You shall not kill" (Exodus 20:13, Deuteronomy 5:17). "You shall not kill" is rightly understood as "You shall not murder."

Recognizing the honorable exception of those who embrace absolute pacifism, Christians believe that there are moral duties to protect life that may entail the taking of life, as in defense against lethal aggression. Most Christians, past and present, have also consid-

ered capital punishment to be morally permissible, citing the words of St. Paul that the ruler "does not bear the sword in vain; he is the servant of God to execute his wrath on the wrongdoer" (Romans 13:4). Some hold that capital punishment is not necessary to protect society and therefore is not morally permissible, while others hold that it is both permissible and necessary.

Our differences on capital punishment are not differences between Evangelicals and Catholics, but are based on different judgments regarding the need for capital punishment, at least in developed societies, and on the widespread perception that capital punishment is in tension, if not conflict, with a consistent ethic of life. At the same time, we are in firm agreement on the critical moral difference between killing the innocent and punishing those who are guilty of killing the innocent.

The ominous, and still recent, development in our society and others is the addition of new justifications for killing. Beyond self-defense, just war, and capital punishment, the principle is now asserted and supported by appeal to law that we are justified in killing human beings who are, for whatever reason, unwanted or deemed to be an excessive burden to others.

There is today no rational disagreement that the child in the womb is, from conception, a living being that is undeniably a human being. Barring natural tragedy, as in miscarriage, or lethal intervention, as in abortion, this being will become what everyone recognizes as a human baby. It is false and pernicious to claim that the unborn child is, at early stages of development, only a potential human being. No life that is not a human being has the potential of becoming a human being, and no life that has the potential of becoming a human being is not a human being.

Every human life is intended by God from eternity for eternity. Human life is sacred because it is the creation of God, the Lord of life. "For you did form my inward parts, you knit me together in my mother's womb" (Psalm 139:13). Nature shares in the consequences of sin and innumerable lives are lost before they have an opportunity to develop in the womb, as many die in disasters such as famine, earthquakes, and hurricanes. Mortality is the common denominator of all life on earth. We are morally responsible, however, for the protection and care of life created in the image and likeness of God. The commandment "You shall not kill" is the negatively stated minimum of what we owe to our fellow human beings.

The direct and intentional taking of innocent human life in abortion, euthanasia, assisted suicide,

and embryonic research is rightly understood as murder. In the exceedingly rare instance of direct threat to the life of the mother, saving her life may entail the death of the unborn child. Such rare and tragic instances are in sharpest contrast to the unlimited abortion license created by the Supreme Court, resulting in more than forty million deaths since 1973.

The blindness of so many to this moral atrocity has many sources but is finally to be traced to the seductive ways of evil advanced by Satan. Jesus says, "He was a murderer from the beginning, and has nothing to do with the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks according to his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies" (John 8:44).

The direct and intentional taking of innocent human life may be attended by what is believed to be compassion, especially in the case of the dependent and debilitated aged. While we can sympathize with those who view their own life or the life of another as a burden and not a gift, and while, by the grace of God, there can be repentance and forgiveness for those who are guilty of committing great evil, there can be no moral justification for murder. We are determined to employ every legal means available to protect, in law and in life, the innocent and vulnerable members of the human community.

We plead also with our fellow citizens who do not accept the authority of God's commandments or the good news that is the gospel of life to consider the consequences of having created a license to kill. In the present state of our tragically disordered law, citizens are given, in the case of abortion, a private "right" to kill those who are too young, too small, too handicapped, too burdensome, or, for whatever reason, not "wanted." When this "right" and the lethal logic that supports it is established in law, there is no principled reason why it should not be applied to the "unwanted" at any point along life's way, as advocates of eugenics, euthanasia, and assisted suicide logically contend.

The inescapably public question posed is whether we as a political community adhere to the founding proposition articulated in the Declaration of Independence that all people are endowed by their Creator with certain "unalienable rights," beginning with the right to life. The course of progress in our political history has been one of inclusion rather than exclusion. Most notable has been the inclusion of slaves and their descendants, and the recognition of the political rights of women. The foundational moral claim on which our polity rests is the claim that all human beings are created equal and are the bearers of rights that we are obliged to respect.

Among the most encouraging developments of recent decades, in our society and the world, is the increased interest in the defense of human rights. This has occurred in large part in reaction to the unspeakable horror of ideologically driven mass murder under the regimes of Nazism and Communism, which denied the equal rights of all. Especially heartening is the growing involvement of Christian communities in the defense of religious, political, and civil rights around the world. Such concern is premised upon the conviction that all human beings are created equal with respect to God-given rights that we are bound to respect. That is the premise attacked by the current abortion regime and related aggressions against the gift of life. Rights are not to be confused with individual desires or felt needs. Rights are joined to duties. Those who cannot assert their rights depend upon others doing their duty. The right to be protected entails our duty to protect.

The inescapable question is this: Why should we care about those who are weak, dependent, burdensome, unproductive, and undeveloped or gravely diminished in their capacity for the interactions we associate with being human? If we are unable to give a morally principled answer to that question, the very concept of human rights is emptied of obliging force and reduced to utilitarian calculation or arbitrary sentiment. The lethal logic invoked in support of the abortion license imperils the lives and well-being of millions who are severely handicapped or who are cared for in the many thousands of facilities for the aged and radically dependent.

Those most in need of defense are those who cannot defend themselves. We are called to speak on behalf of those who cannot speak for themselves. Among the most defenseless are the unborn child, the severely disabled, and the dependent elderly. There are today legal protections of the disabled and elderly, but the unborn are totally dependent and totally vulnerable to the will of others. Once fully born, they are deemed to have rights that are protected in law, even though they are at that point no more human beings and no less dependent than they were hours, weeks, or months before. Yet before birth, and even in the very process of being born, they are now deemed not to have rights that society is obliged to respect. This perverse view of human rights is irrational and incoherent. Its result is the unjust killing of many millions of those who are indisputably human beings and the undoing of the very concept of human rights.

We recognize that, short of Our Lord's return in glory, there will always be great evil in the world.

Human history is the drama of conflict between truth and falsehood, light and darkness, life and death. The witness to the gospel of life echoes today the words of Moses to the children of Israel: "I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse; therefore choose life that you and your children may live" (Deuteronomy 30:19). With the apostle Paul, we contend, and call others to contend, against the "principalities and powers" of the present darkness (Ephesians 6:12).

There will likely always be abortions, as there will be other great evils. In the words of Jesus, "Temptations to sin are sure to come; but woe to him by whom they come" (Luke 17:1). While sin and temptations to sin are constant, the notion that the killing of the innocent is a "right" in law is relatively recent and has thrown our society into legal, political, and moral confusion and conflict. The way to justice and restored civility is a firm commitment to the goal of a society in which every vulnerable human being, including every unborn child, is protected in law and welcomed in life.

The healing professions in our society have been deeply corrupted by the culture of death. Not only in abortion but also in practices such as doctor-assisted suicide, the noble calling of medicine has been grievously debased. In medical education, we witness the ominous abandonment of the Hippocratic Oath and its prohibition of killing.

We earnestly plead with medical practitioners to recover the moral integrity of their profession. With specific reference to the aged, the debilitated, and the dying, it is often the case that restoration to health is not possible. But no life is without value or is unworthy of life. While there is no obligation to prolong the process of imminent death, the intentional hastening of death is morally prohibited. The healing profession is also the caring profession. We cannot always heal, but we can always care. Also in the most difficult of cases, it is a perverse and twisted idea of compassion that seduces medical practitioners into violating the imperative always to care and never to kill. We gratefully acknowledge and prayerfully encourage medical practitioners who strive to restore their profession to the unqualified service of life.

We are keenly aware of the burden of guilt borne, and often painfully experienced, by those who have been complicit in the culture of death. Women beyond numbering mourn for their children whom they denied the living of the life that was theirs. As with King Herod's killing of the innocents, so also now: "A voice was heard in Ramah, wailing and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she

could not be consoled, because they were no more" (Matthew 2:18). A striking feature of the movement against abortion is the leadership of women who have experienced the horror and heartbreak of abortion and plead with their sisters to choose life. They and many others work selflessly in helping women with crisis pregnancies and also in assisting with adoptions.

Men beyond numbering are complicit in the culture of death. The legal abortion license has made it easier to exploit women sexually; to abandon them or refuse to support them in the bearing of the new life for which men are equally responsible; and even to coerce them into having the child killed. This is a wickedness of unspeakable proportions and is only compounded by men who self-servingly construe the abortion license as a form of liberation for the women they exploit.

As the sin is great, so is God's mercy greater. "In this God shows his love for us, that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we are now justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God" (Romans 5:8-9). As the psalm declares:

*For as the heavens are high above the earth
so great is his steadfast love
toward those who fear him;
As far as the east is from the west,
so far does he remove
our transgressions from us. (Psalm 103:11-12)*

We thank God for the women and men who, having been complicit in the evil of abortion, have been led to contrition, repentance, and newness of life; for abortionists who have abandoned their trafficking in death; for those who have established thousands of crisis-pregnancy centers to assist women in troubled circumstances to welcome the gift of new life; and for all who have over the years sustained a growing pro-life movement for change toward a culture of life. This is a movement for change that, more than any in American history, claims the allegiance of millions who have no personal stake in the cause other than the protection of the innocent. It is most particularly gratifying that the leadership of this movement is now passing to a younger generation that views with horrified repugnance an abortion regime to which so many of their elders had become morally numbed.

Even as the dark years of the unlimited abortion license may be coming to an end, the culture of death insinuates itself into the sciences and most particularly into the field of biotechnology. The creation and destruction of human life for research, cloning, and related purposes underscore the truth that the pro-life

movement is for the duration, meaning until Our Lord returns in glory.

Our churches do not simply support the pro-life movement as a social cause. Because the gospel of life is integral to God's loving purpose for his creation, the Church of Jesus Christ, comprehensively understood, is a pro-life movement continuing God's mission until the end of time. In the light of this truth, we plead with Christians who support the legal license to kill the innocent to consider whether they have not set themselves against the will of God and, to that extent, separated themselves from the company of Christian discipleship.

There are no doubt many reasons for our society's perilous drift toward a culture of death. One major cause is the abortion regime established by the Supreme Court by the *Roe v. Wade* decision of January 22, 1973. That decision is rightly described as an act of raw judicial power that eliminated in all fifty states existing legal protections of unborn children. It is an encouraging measure of the moral health of our society that the abortion license decreed by *Roe* has not been accepted by the great majority of Americans. It now seems possible that this question will be returned to the process of democratic deliberation and decision in the several states. In that process, we as Evangelicals and Catholics together pledge our relentless efforts to persuade our fellow citizens to secure justice in law for the most vulnerable among us.

While political and legal developments are important, they are not of paramount importance. Deeper and of greater consequence is the moral and cultural impoverishment in our understanding of the gift of life, of our duties to others—especially to those who are most dependent—and of individual freedom that finds its true fulfillment not in license but in love.

Our public culture is debased by distortions of sexuality that are antithetical to the flourishing of marriage, fidelity, and parenthood. The indispensable institution of the family, which is the sanctuary of life, is widely devalued and weakened by divorce. Moreover, while we are not agreed on the moral permissi-

bility of artificial contraception, we recognize the sad effects of a widespread "contraceptive mentality" that divorces sexual love from procreation and views children as a burden to be avoided rather than as a gift to be cherished. We plead with the members of our communities, Evangelical and Catholic, to consider anew the call to be open to new life, and the meaning of that call for the relationship between unitive and procreative sexual love within the bond of marriage.

Finally, our society's drift toward a culture of death will not be arrested and reversed without a bolder and more persuasive witness to the gospel of life centered in Jesus Christ who is "the way, the truth, and the life." Whatever our cultural circumstance, whatever the ebb and flow of political and legal fortunes, our first duty is evangelization: to share "in season and out of season" (2 Timothy 4:2) the good news of the unsurpassable gift of eternal life, beginning now, in knowing Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

To know him is to serve him, also in contending for a more just social order that defends the gift of life wherever it is threatened. As did the early Christians to the society of their time, so we propose to our fellow citizens a new humanism. This biblical humanism is deeply grounded in the dignity of the human person at every stage of development, disadvantage, or decline; it is supportive of the founding convictions of our nation; and it holds the promise of keeping at bay the barbaric devaluations of human life to which history is so manifestly prone.

We cannot and would not impose this vision of a culture of life upon others. We do propose to our fellow Christians and to all Americans that they join with us in a process of deliberation and decision that holds the promise of a more just and humane society committed, in life and law, to honoring the inestimable dignity of every human being created in the image and likeness of God. For our part, as Evangelicals and Catholics together, we refuse to despair of the power of public witness and persuasion in the service of every member of the human community, for whom Christ came "that they may have life and have it abundantly." [FT]

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Dr. Timothy George
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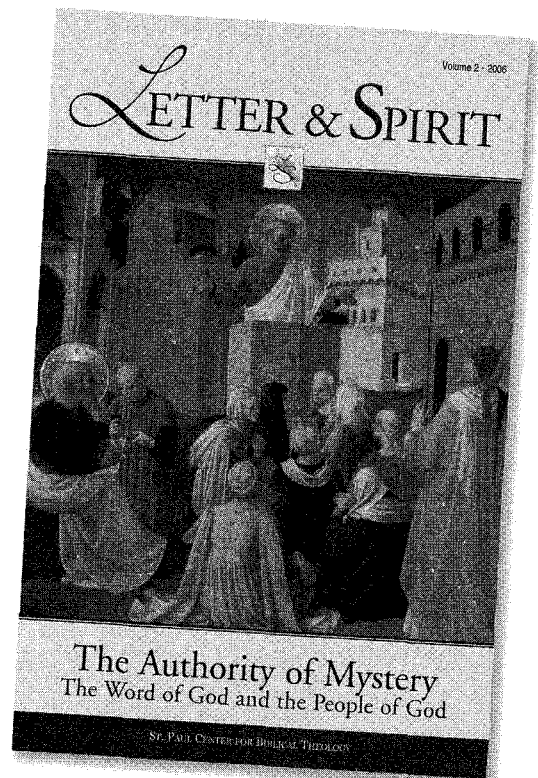
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When the Swallows Come Back to Capistrano

Catholic Culture in America

Joseph Bottum

I

The swallows would swirl through San Juan Capistrano, rising like a mist from the sea every March 19. Or so the legend goes. In fact, the blue-feathered birds sometimes reached California as early as mid-February, and when they arrived at the end of their long trek from Argentina, they would infest the place like happy locusts, plastering their gourd-shaped nests among the crossbeams and crannies, the nooks and corners—anywhere they could get their colonies to stick to the old stucco and adobe of the mission founded by Father Junipero Serra in 1776.

They were cliff swallows, *Hirundo pyrrhonota*, the woman from the local Audubon Society explained, speaking in the rapid, inflectionless voice of someone reading, for the sixth time that day, from a memo stuck to her desk with yellowing strips of cellophane tape. Lacking the deeply forked tail of the better-known barn swallow, *Hirundo rustica*, cliff swallows are known by their white forehead, buff rump, and short, squared-off tail feathers. They gather in large flocks, fluttering their wings above their heads in a characteristic motion while gathering mud for their nests. And they haven't returned to the Mission San Juan Capistrano—darting past the old Serra Chapel and flitting through the ruins of the Great Stone Church—for nearly twenty years.

Not that the mission hasn't tried to win them back. What's Capistrano without its swallows? *All the mission bells will ring, / The chapel choir will sing, / When*

the swallows come back to Capistrano, the most popular song of 1939 told the nation, and for years after the swallows disappeared, you could see the groundskeepers out making artificial mud puddles with their green plastic hoses. In the 1990s, someone had the notion of hiring a local potter to fool the birds, and the mission is still dotted with clay nests: ceramic lures that failed to bring the square-tailed nest builders, *Hirundo pyrrhonota*, back to hear the bells.

There's a figure in all this, I think—a metaphor, perhaps, or a synecdoche—for the condition of American Catholicism. Its long history, certainly, from the Spanish colonial beginnings on. But, most of all, San Juan Capistrano seems an image for recent decades—because sometime around 1970, the leaders of the Catholic Church in America took a stick and knocked down all the swallows' nests.

They had their reasons. What was anyone to make of those endless 1950s sodalities and perpetual-adoration societies, the Mary Day processions, the distracting rosaries shouted out during the mumbled Latin Masses? The tangle and confusion of all the discolored, obliterated, friar-minored, Salesianed, Benedictined, Cistercian communities of monks and nuns?

The arcanery of decorations on albs and chasubles, the processions of Holy Water blessings, the grottos with their precarious rows of fire-hazard candles flickering away in little red cups, the colored seams and peculiar buttons that identified monsignors, the wimpled school sisters, the tiny Spanish grandmothers muttering prayers in their black mantillas, the First Communion girls wrapped up in white like prepubescent brides, the mumbled Irish prejudices, the loud Italian festivals, the Holy Door indulgences, the pocket guides

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to Thomistic philosophy, the Knights of Columbus with their cocked hats and comic-opera swords, the tinny mission bells, the melismatic chapel choirs—none of this was the Church, some of it actually obscured the Church, and the decision to clear out the mess was not unintelligent or uninformed or unintended.

It was merely insane. An entire culture nested in the crossbeams and crannies, the nooks and corners, of the Catholic Church. And it wasn't until the swallows had been chased away that anyone seemed to realize how much the Church itself needed them, darting around the chapels and flitting through the cathedrals. They provided beauty, and eccentricity, and life. What they did, really, was provide *Catholicism* to the Catholic Church in America, and none of the multimedia Masses and liturgical extravaganzas in the years since—none of the decoy nests and artificial puddles—has managed to call them home. *All the mission bells will ring, / The chapel choir will sing, / When the swallows come back to Capistrano.*

II

And yet, one can see signs, here and there, that the swallows might have begun their return, mostly through the pro-life movement. In itself, that is a disturbing image: *Roe v. Wade* as the event that most transformed American Catholicism over the last thirty years. And from the outward and visible signs, the new culture appears much, much thinner than the old; Catholic literature, to take an easy example, remains barely a shadow of what it was in the 1950s. Still, in ways that no one has fully traced, opposition to the Supreme Court's 1973 abortion decree has helped undo the separation of Catholic culture from the Catholic Church.

Watch, for instance, the New York kids out praying on Saturday mornings with the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal in Manhattan and Queens. Or visit the energetic and hungry pro-life groups at the nation's colleges. Princeton, Fordham, MIT, Penn State: It hardly matters where or what the school is; somewhere on campus there's a group of Catholic undergraduates joining the evangelicals to fight abortion with Students for Life, Life Chain, March for Life, and Day of Silence for the Unborn.

And then there are all the Catholic figures who have emerged in the various worlds of public discourse over the past twenty years. At the political magazines, at the think tanks, in the law schools, in the judiciary, on the television talk shows, on the book circuit, across the nation there's a way Catholics have of recognizing one another: a wink and a nod, a figurative handshake that

declares joint membership in a particular intellectual culture. In 1956 it might have been a fragment of ecclesial Latin, the mention of an *imprimatur* and a *nihil obstat*, the odd way of pronouncing the name *Augustine*. In 2006, it is instead a verbal gesture at natural law and a firm rejection of abortion. The result is the beginning of a new culture: a new Catholicism that, at its best, simply bypasses the stalemates of the 1970s.

Admittedly, you'd hardly know it from the way in which the Catholic Church still seems to play on the American public scene. No matter how much things have changed, newspaper and television reporters continue to frame stories about religion with categories now decades old: *liberals vs. conservatives!*, *feminists vs. chauvinists!*, *reformers vs. reactionaries!* And with just a little shove, Catholics figures—politicians, commentators, celebrities—can fall back into those tired, well-worn grooves.

A few years ago, Georgetown University hosted a conference on the state of Catholicism in America. The opening sessions, about the effect of the priest scandals, were interesting enough, in their way. It wasn't till the second day's debate, between Michael Novak and Monica Helwig, that a truly palpable gloom settled over the room. For the neoconservative Novak and the feminist Helwig have had this debate so many times, over so many years, that they began to squabble like an old couple locked in a bickering marriage: forgotten occasions suddenly remembered, dead quarrels fanned back to flame, until we seemed to be back at the 1976 Call to Action conference in Detroit, the low point in post-Vatican II American Catholic unity—nothing learned, nothing gained, nothing advanced in thirty years.

That feeling was unfair, particularly to Michael Novak, who has done important work on religion, economics, and human rights over the long years since the 1970s. Even more, the feeling was unfair to Pope John Paul II, and Mother Teresa, and the new *Catechism*, and everything that has changed since the confusion that followed Vatican II. We have witnessed over the last quarter-century what the papal biographer George Weigel calls "the maturation of Catholic social thought." In its slow, ponderous way, Catholic thinking has turned to accept the social goods of the modern world and to present clear arguments about how they might be used for a greater purpose.

Certainly, there still exist media-oriented pseudo-groups like Catholics for a Free Choice—founded in 1973 with the later-defrocked Jesuit priest Joseph O'Rourke as its first president—that soldier on as though nothing had changed in more than thirty years. And there are still Catholic writers—the *Washington Post's* columnist E.J. Dionne is a good example—who,

though anti-abortion themselves, continue to propose one new compromise after another, each trumpeted as the solution *at last!* to the national divide over abortion. There are Catholic politicians, as well, from Massachusetts' Democratic senator John Kerry to Maine's Republican senator Susan Collins, who intone Mario Cuomo's decades-old mantra of "personally opposed to abortion" while they vote for abortion measures.

They are hardly unique in this. Far too much of America's social argument remains caught in the 1970s. The marchers in peace parades are redolent of Vietnam activism circa 1972—in both how they see the war in Iraq and how they see themselves. "I've become almost homesick for the smell of tear gas," Hunter S. Thompson declared at a rally in 2003, and the gathered protesters erupted in cheers. The fact that they are not actually being tear-gassed only makes the nostalgia easier.

But one can find at least hints that Catholicism has finally begun to leave the deadlocked past behind. Within the new Catholic culture, abortion is no longer a 1970s kind of disputed or divisive issue. Regardless of polls that reveal some dissent about abortion among those who identify themselves as Catholic, you can't travel far in Catholic circles without feeling the pro-life pressure. Every diocese, from the most liberal to the most conservative, maintains a pro-life office. Every parish, from the most radical to the most traditional, refuses to preach in favor of legalized abortion. The passion, the excitement, the moral force that makes less-dedicated people feel a little guilty—everything that makes a culture, in other words—is pro-life at its core.

Any serious believer will insist that the Church itself exists to distribute the sacraments and preach the gospel, and there is a promise that the gates of hell will not prevail against it. Cultures, on the other hand, rise and fall, appear and disappear, and for a long while it looked as though there wouldn't be *any* Catholic culture in the United States. If that no longer seems the case, it is because something different has emerged—although, to understand how and why, you have to brace yourself and revisit the mess that was the 1970s.

III

The Catholic Church probably appeared to most Americans in the mid-1970s a vestigial and fading thing: suicidally absorbed in its internal battles and working hard to fall by the wayside. What role could it have in the nation's political and cultural future?

The "secularization thesis"—the claim that religion is a remnant of premodern superstition, doomed to fade away with time's advance—was at the peak of its explanatory power in those strange days. Yes, *Time*

magazine declared 1976 the "Year of the Evangelical," as Jimmy Carter gained the presidency and religiously identified political groups began to stretch their wings. But the evangelicals were typically viewed by high culture as throwbacks and Neanderthals who simply hadn't heard the news. And through it all, the Catholic Church in the United States looked like secularism's Exhibit Number One as it hemorrhaged priests and nuns and parishioners. In 1965, there were 8,000 seminarians; within twenty years there were only 3,000. Women's communities collapsed from 180,000 nuns to 70,000. Weekly Mass attendance fell from 67 percent to 45 percent.

Even the remaining believers often didn't seem to hold Church doctrine strongly. The stand against contraception, set forth in Paul VI's 1968 encyclical *Humanae Vitae*, remains the obvious example—and for good reason: "It rolled like water off a duck's back," an elderly priest in Rapid City once told me about his attempts to preach it. "The people in the pews listened politely, gave a shrug, and stopped at the drugstore on their way home from Mass." Every poll since 1968 has found large majorities of American Catholics disagreeing with their Church on contraception.

And yet, I'm not sure that the problem was really the laity's disagreement. It may have been instead the laity's great *shrug*—the widespread feeling among normal, everyday Catholics in the 1970s that they couldn't figure out, and perhaps shouldn't much care, where the Church stood from one day to another. The feeling had cause. In the years after Vatican II finished in 1965, nearly everything seemed up for grabs, and nearly everyone was uncertain what would end up licit and what would end up illicit in Catholic teaching.

In the early 1970s, it was not unknown that reputable Catholic theologians and even bishops would, in ecumenical settings, concelebrate the Eucharist with liberal Protestant clergy. Such events were unusual, of course, but those participating thought they were only a step or two ahead of where the Church was going. If you cannot imagine this happening today, that's partly because the old mainline Protestant churches matter so much less than they used to. Besides, their sharp anti-Catholic turn in recent years—much of it occasioned by the battles over abortion—has made this kind of unfocused ecumenical gestures pointless. Mostly, however, you can't imagine bishops or theologians of stature concelebrating the Eucharist with non-Catholics because the doctrine of *communio*, with all it entails for Christian unity and division, has grown firm again.

Back then, however, nearly every element of Catholic doctrine appeared as tentative and changeable

as figures in wet clay. Indeed, insofar as anyone could tell at the time, the emerging shape seemed to be the separation of Catholicism even from Catholic communion. Why *not* consecrate the elements with almost anyone who wants to join in?

These were the days, you remember, when popular writers such as Father Andrew Greeley would speak of “cultural Catholics,” vaguely identifiable by their social sense rather than by their actually assenting to Church doctrine or going to Mass. Sociology in the 1950s had predicted the assimilation of American Catholics as they crossed the crabgrass frontier to suburbia, or melted down their ethnic heritage in intermarriage, or rose to middle-class respectability. For the next generation of writers, Catholicism itself was on the chopping block. Left or right, everybody piled on, and the discount-book tables were littered with copies of *The Decomposition of Catholicism* and *Runaway Church* and *Can Catholic Schools Survive?* and *The Devastated Vineyard* and *Bare Ruined Choirs* and *Has the Catholic Church Gone Mad?*

It was the silly season, and anything seemed possible. Remember Malachi Martin’s odd bestsellers? Remember *The Exorcist*? In 1971, the Jesuit Robert Drinan became the first Catholic priest elected to the U.S. Congress—only to reject the emerging pro-life movement as “the powers of darkness” and denounce his fellow Catholics for “seeking to impose” their pro-life views “on the rest of the nation.” Stretching the Church on both ends, Latin America produced both Gustavo Gutiérrez’s *A Theology of Liberation*, a key text in the emergence of an openly Marxist Catholicism, and Joaquín Saenz y Arriaga’s *Sede Vacante*, a foundational book for the new traditionalism. The exiled archbishop Ngô Đình Thúc—brother of the assassinated Catholic president of South Vietnam, Ngô Đình Diệm—was wandering the globe, consecrating his own bishops left and right. The Jesuits were giving up ownership of their colleges. The nuns were giving up their habits.

And then there was the bishops’ conference. The 1970s were a politicized time, and perhaps it is no surprise that official Catholic statements were equally politicized: the Resolution on Southeast Asia, the Declaration on Farm Labor Legislation, the Proposals on Handgun Violence, the Statement on Domestic Food Policy. It’s worth noting, however, that all these papers from the bishops’ office were on the Left and moving even more leftward through the 1980s—even while the majority of American Catholics were trending right in their voting patterns.

Part of the reason was the way the bishops had structured their national offices. Since World War I, American dioceses had supported the National

Catholic Welfare Conference, a lobbying office in Washington, D.C. It had a long history of progressivism, dominated for years by Monsignor John A. Ryan, dubbed the “Right Reverend New Dealer” for his support of Franklin Roosevelt’s economic policies.

But Vatican II demanded that bishops work more closely together “for the common good of the Church.” So, in 1966, the American hierarchy met to transform the old welfare conference into a new, two-pronged organization called the “National Conference of Catholic Bishops and the U.S. Catholic Conference”—a name whose awkward acronym, the NCCB/USCC, signaled how unwieldy it would prove. (In 1997, the two prongs were merged again to become the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.)

Officially, the NCCB was the ruling side, composed only of the bishops themselves and responsible for things like transforming the liturgy in light of Vatican II. But the real force was the much larger bureaucracy on the USCC side, which included priests, nuns, and laypeople as members, and had a remit to pronounce on education, social development and peace, and communication. “The USCC was intended as a laboratory for shared responsibility at the national level,” one Catholic journalist recently observed. “Shared responsibility also was the rationale underlying the bishops’ controversial ‘Call to Action’ conference.”

Ah, yes, Call to Action. You can’t read much about contemporary Catholicism without hearing of the conference that met in Detroit in 1976. Everyone agrees that it marked *something*—either the highest reach of the reforming spirit of Vatican II, or the finest example of nuttiness in American Catholic history, but one way or the other, a profound symbol of its time.

Back in 1971, Pope Paul VI had issued an apostolic letter that asked Catholics to “take up as their own proper task the renewal of the temporal order.” Indeed, “it is to all Christians that we address a fresh and insistent *call to action*”—for “beneath an outward appearance of indifference, in the heart of every man there is a will to live in brotherhood and a thirst for justice and peace, which is to be expanded.”

That phrase, “call to action,” became the rallying cry of progressive Catholics everywhere. At a synod in Rome the same year, an international group of bishops expanded the call to include a demand for hard self-examination and self-criticism, declaring, “The Church recognizes that anyone who ventures to speak to people about justice must first be just in their eyes; hence, we must undertake an examination of the modes of action, of the possessions, and of the lifestyle found within the Church itself.”

It is not easy to describe the error here. Who could be against self-examination and self-criticism? If anything, Christian faith seems to demand it. But the actual effect of this demand from the synod was to invert Paul VI's call. The energy that was supposed to go outward instead got turned inward, and what the pope had intended as a church acting against the injustices of the world became instead an obsessive interiority—a self-devouring church that was determined to find the world's injustices first within itself. The U.S. bishops returned from the synod and obediently began several years of “a creative consultation process” that would culminate in 1976 with a three-day meeting in Detroit.

In truth, the bishops may not have been all that obedient. Most of the ones who were genuinely interested, such as Archbishop Peter Gerety of Newark, were outspoken progressives. The conservative bishops tended not so much to opposition as to indifference, and they turned over the whole “creative consultation process” to the bureaucracy of the USCC. Why is it no surprise that by the time the 1976 meeting rolled around, a majority of the 1,340 delegates were Church bureaucrats, and the mechanisms they proposed for fixing the Church's ills always demanded more bureaucracy?

“Some delegates were quite frank” about regarding “the Catholic Church in America as a potentially useful auxiliary of the extreme left-wing of the Democratic Party,” the conservative writer Russell Kirk would snap. “Others were more radical in their aspirations.” That distinction—between leftists and radicals—was potentially a sharp one: The leftists wanted American Catholics to direct their moral energy to the social and economic battles that were roiling the nation; the radicals wanted the Church to change its doctrines about itself.

The two sides could have fought each other at Detroit. After all, if you have a political agenda for America, as the leftists did, you don't want your ally to waste its strength on internal battles or dismantle itself in the name of ideological reform; what you want instead is good, old-fashioned, politically powerful Catholicism to help push your cause (as, for example, the labor unions knew from the 1890s to the 1950s). But the radicals carried the day at Call to Action and turned the whole event in on the Church. “You came here to listen, not to talk!” one delegate lectured a bishop who had ventured a comment at the meeting.

The resolutions that began by demanding the Church fight “chronic racism, sexism, militarism, and poverty in modern society” grew into resolutions that the Church change its positions on celibacy, male clergy, homosexuality, birth control, and Communion for the divorced and remarried—with further decisions to

be made by majority votes of laypeople. “This was one of the greatest days in the Church,” an ecstatic Archbishop Gerety told the *New York Times*, “a good indication of what the people in this country are feeling.”

Perhaps so, although national politics over the next two decades suggests the opposite. Regardless, it didn't have much to do with anything recognizable as Catholic. Avery Dulles, who helped prepare the notes on ecclesiology that were supposed to guide the meeting, remembers, “One of the rules was that the people who drew up the White Papers... were not to be allowed to defend the papers in any way, because then, the idea went, the members of the conference, the people in attendance, would be so overawed by their authority that they would not be morally free to express themselves.”

Particularly in the rush of resolutions in the closing hours, reforming the Catholic Church seemed to become necessary for nearly all the world's problems. The delegates would offer up one demand for reform after another—married priests, women priests, lay bishops, gay bishops, no bishops: anything and everything. “And the vote,” Dulles recalls, invariably “came through overwhelmingly, yes... It was madness.”

IV

The madness of those days was hardly confined to the Left. During the late 1960s and early 1970s, the radical Catholic traditionalists emerged as well: the mirror image, the doppelgängers, of the Call to Action crew. Opposition to the liturgical reforms of Vatican II varied on a range from grumbling to heresy. Some traditionalists stayed within the Church, others flitted on the edges, and a few openly embraced schism—believing they were sacrificing themselves, like ancient martyrs, for the one true Church *they* could see, even if no one else could.

The most memorable of the radical traditionalists may have been Veronica Lueken, “the Bayside Seer.” A housewife from New York, she had her first vision in 1968, when St. Thérèse of Lisieux visited her while she was praying for Robert Kennedy, dying in California from an assassin's bullet. Two years later—on April 7, 1970, to be exact, and exact dates are vital in Lueken's mysticism—the Blessed Virgin Mary announced she would appear to Lueken at St. Robert Bellarmine church in Queens on June 18, 1970, and many times thereafter.

With astonishing speed, Lueken became a religious celebrity and St. Robert Bellarmine a Marian shrine. Thousands of devotees descended on the church, forcing the parish leaders to fence off the grounds in 1973.

Her embarrassed bishop, Francis Mugavero, declared there was “no doctrinal basis for the content” of Lueken’s messages. Undeterred, Lueken began typing up and circulating mimeographs so all could read the messages she was receiving from the Virgin.

The most striking theme of these early messages was the horror of abortion, just then becoming legal in New York State. “The Eternal Father commands that you stop these murders at once!” thunders one from August 5, 1971. “You will not destroy the lives of the unborn. Human life is sacred in the eyes of God. No man has the right to destroy a life. The Father, He sends this life to you, and only He will decide when it will return back to the Kingdom.” Two years later, when the Supreme Court made abortion universal with *Roe v. Wade*, Lueken’s followers saw her condemnations as prophetic, a sure sign the apparitions were authentic.

Saint after saint came to Lueken: Robert Bellarmine, Teresa of Avila, Bernadette of Lourdes, Thomas Aquinas. The archangels Michael and Gabriel appeared as well, and even Jesus Christ himself. And as the visions multiplied, their targets expanded. Her vision on September 14, 1979, for instance, denounced popular music: “You must remove from your homes these diabolical agents of hell, the recordings of Lucifer, that will put into your child a spell, a hypnotism leading to promiscuity, deviant sex, homosexuality, drugs, murders, abortions, and all manner of foul deeds that could only be conceived in the mind of the prince of darkness, Lucifer himself.” The devil had infiltrated even the Church, according to Lueken, destroying the sacred liturgy and placing an “imposter pope” in Rome, a Satanic pretender substituted for Paul VI, leaving the Church without a true pope: *sede vacante*, “the seat empty.”

For a brief moment, Veronica Lueken seemed ready to capture the American imagination. She was profiled everywhere, from *New York* magazine to *Rolling Stone*. She was even consulted by a detective working on the Son of Sam murders, in hopes of eliciting some supernatural clues. At the height of her fame, Lueken’s followers wielded enough power to have the city government grant them a shrine at Flushing Meadow Park, where her team set up These Last Days Ministries, accompanied by a Lay Order of Saint Michael. Recordings, transcripts, books, and relics of the Bayside Seer proliferated.

In 1986, Bishop Mugavero finished his investigation and announced that “no credibility can be given to the so-called ‘apparitions’ reported by Veronica Lueken and her followers.” Indeed, “the messages and other related propaganda contain statements which, among other things, are contrary to the teachings of the Catholic Church.” By that point, however, the move-

ment was already in decline, and though it survives to this day, primarily as a website, Lueken’s death in 1995 at age seventy-three released most of her few remaining followers.

Lueken was only one of the self-proclaimed visionaries and mystics who attempted to reclaim the Church after Vatican II. The 1970s produced dozens of odd figures. Remember the demon hunters Ed and Lorraine Warren? Or the cult leader Francis Schuckardt? Or Clarence Kelly, who broke away to found the traditionalist Society of St. Pius V because Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre’s traditionalist Society of Pius X just wasn’t traditional enough?

And yet, though they were always intense and often bizarre, not all of them were from the lunatic fringe—as the curious case of Gomma De Pauw shows. Born in 1918, the son of a Belgian newspaper editor, De Pauw was an impressive figure. Drafted out of the seminary, he served as a combat medic with the Belgian infantry before being captured at Dunkirk. After his escape from a German POW camp, he was ordained (by special indult from the Holy See, recognizing Belgium’s state of emergency) at age twenty-three, the youngest priest in the world at the time. He promptly returned to the battlefield, serving as a military chaplain and winning awards for his courage.

After the war, he resumed his studies, taking a triple licentiate from the University of Louvain and, coming to America in 1949, a second doctorate from the Catholic University in Washington, D.C. John XXIII appointed him a *peritus*, an expert adviser, at Vatican II, and Paul VI elevated him to monsignor.

That was the high point of his harmony with the Church. Even before the council had finished, De Pauw had grown horrified by the proposed changes, particularly in the liturgy. In March 1965, he announced that the long fight for “truth and tradition” had begun. *Time* magazine reported: “At a Manhattan press conference last week, Father De Pauw argued that the American bishops had been bamboozled into accepting reform by a few liberal theologians . . . who have ‘misrepresented the American Catholics and seduced the bishops in Rome.’ De Pauw hinted that these theological liberals were also flirting with heresy by downgrading the authority of the pope and devotion to Mary. To counteract these tendencies, he said, his movement is urging the bishops to limit the number of vernacular Masses and take a national referendum on Catholic opinion about the liturgical changes.”

Indeed, he declared in 1965, the changes of Vatican II have made the Mass “no longer the sacrament of Calvary but a song fest with the overtones of a hootenanny.” In 1970 he added that “liturgical beatniks” were

“striving to de-Romanize the Catholic Church,” creating “the collective *madness* which has taken possession of our once Catholic Church in America.”

None of De Pauw’s fulminations sat well with his superior, Baltimore’s Cardinal Sheehan. But the war hero and *peritus* monsignor was hard to discipline, and through his friends in Rome, he was placed under the jurisdiction of a traditionalist-friendly bishop in Italy. In 1968, De Pauw established Ave Maria Chapel in Westbury, New York, advertised as the “only publicly functioning Traditionalist Catholic parish in the entire world.” For the next thirty-five years, he celebrated the Tridentine Mass each week, with some of his parishioners traveling over a hundred miles to attend. He edited a conservative journal, *Sounds of Truth and Tradition*, and produced a worldwide Sunday radio Mass.

Perhaps De Pauw’s greatest feat—one that few other hard traditionalists have been able to pull off—is that, through it all, he remained a priest in good standing with the Church. Certainly, he clashed with the hierarchy many times. At one point, only the unlikely intervention of an exiled Chinese bishop saved him. But he never had his priestly faculties removed, never fell into open schism, and never became a *sedevacantist*, asserting that the current pope was illegitimate. Indeed, for all his criticism of the post-conciliar Church, particularly the pontificate of Paul VI, De Pauw defended the papacy’s authority. In 1995, he disturbed rival traditionalists by mildly praising John Paul II during the pope’s visit to America.

Commar De Pauw was perhaps the last of the old-style traditionalists: formed before Vatican II, brilliantly educated, fluent in Latin, and rooted in the European tradition. Nicholas Gruner might stand as a typical example of the new kind of traditionalist that emerged in the 1970s. Born in Canada in 1942, Gruner took as his great passion Our Lady of Fatima, the Marian apparitions to three Portuguese children in 1917. After his ordination in 1976, Father Gruner established Our Lady’s Fatima Apostolate in North America, publishing the first issue of his journal *Fatima Crusader* in 1978.

It was in the journal’s pages that he preached not only the central message of Fatima—repentance and conversion—but also the Virgin’s insistence that Soviet communism would spread unless Russia was consecrated to her immaculate heart. All the popes since 1917 had failed to do this, and everything from the Russian invasion of Afghanistan to the attempted assassination of John Paul II was proof that Fr. Gruner had correctly read the signs of the times.

The movement proved successful for a while. Fueled by volunteers and donations, Gruner took his

International Fatima Rosary Crusade on the road, hauling along an enormous Pilgrim Virgin Statue. To date, he “has preached on the Fatima message in more than 500 cities and 30 countries,” according to his enthusiastic website.

None of this was obviously heretical, and much of it was praiseworthy. But, as with so many other traditionalists, Fr. Gruner couldn’t draw a line as he got closer and closer to the outer edge of orthodoxy. Like their twins on the Far Left, the traditionalists all had some hunger in them that made them push and push until somebody finally pushed back. Alarmed that Our Lady’s message was being suppressed, Gruner began openly quarreling with the hierarchy. Digging into the reason for the silence on Fatima, Gruner informed his readers that the cause was the infamous “Vatican-Moscow Pact,” a secret treaty signed during Vatican II, in which the Church agreed not to denounce communism (and therefore to soft-pedal the message of Fatima) in return for better treatment of Christians behind the Iron Curtain.

You might think the election of an anticommunist Pole as pope in 1978 would finish off such fantasies, but Gruner continued to inveigh against Church leaders for failing to obey Our Lady of Fatima. His magazine grew increasingly frustrated and even apocalyptic: Terrors and catastrophes awaited us all if the pope refused to heed the demands of heaven. Gruner’s followers assailed the Vatican with petitions, imploring the pope to consecrate Russia to the Immaculate Heart of Mary *now*—explaining why all previous papal consecrations had not met the *exact, precise, meticulous* requirements of Our Lady.

Even a message from Sister Lucia dos Santos, the chief seer of Fatima—saying that John Paul II had performed the consecration in 1984 and God had accepted it—didn’t suffice. Gruner’s followers dismissed it as either a forgery or a lie to which Sr. Lucia had been forced by arm-twisting from the Vatican. The Soviet Union’s collapse in 1991 was an illusion, Gruner insisted, and Russia’s evils would soon manifest themselves again. And what about that third secret of Fatima, finally released to the world by the Vatican in 2000? It was not the *true* or *full* third secret, and the Roman hierarchy had conspired yet again to muffle Our Lady’s voice.

With a résumé like this, Fr. Gruner was bound to fall afoul of Church authorities, and he finally did in 2001. After years of trying to find a bishop to protect his apostolate, he had his case referred to the Vatican, and the verdict came back: “The Congregation for the Clergy, upon the mandate from a higher authority, wishes to state that Rev. Nicholas Gruner is under an *a divinis* suspension.” It was a bitter blow for the priest, even as his followers resorted to legalistic arguments, as tradi-

tionalists always seem to end up doing, to claim the sentence was invalid.

Gruner continues his Fatima ministry to this day—pumping out the same fiery magazine, producing books and pamphlets, holding conferences and going on pilgrimages—though his status is, at the least, irregular. But he remains in the minds of his followers and himself a misunderstood oracle, persecuted for revealing God's intentions for humanity, fearlessly proclaiming truths the craven prelates refuse to hear.

V

That charge—craven prelates, cowardly bishops—is something you hear over and over again in American Catholic circles. When, say, Saginaw's Bishop Robert Carlson pronounces something against gay marriage, it is immediately ascribed to his fear of Rome. When Bishop Tod Brown urges Catholics in Orange County to approve same-sex civil unions, it too is blamed on fear, in this case of negative attention from California's liberal press.

Rumors and conspiracy theories abound. Cardinal Law failed to act against priest-predators in Boston until the public revelations of 2002 forced his hand, and the *real reason*—it's hard, in writing, to invest that phrase with the full, revelatory, explains-everything tone with which it is always pronounced—is that he was being blackmailed. Paul Shanley, the former Boston priest now in jail for child molestation, publicly called for legalizing sex with minors at a 1979 meeting of the North American Man-Boy Love Association, but Cardinal Law did nothing because (the conspiracy theorists insist) Shanley's friends threatened to publish the names of all the homosexual priests in Boston.

Rumors sometimes do prove true. Archbishop Rembert Weakland really had paid off a former student with "\$450,000 in hush money" before his 2002 resignation, reported the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*. But true or false, the rumors all begin with the assumption of the American hierarchy's failure. There's a tone of contempt for the nation's bishops you hear widely from Catholics in the United States: left or right, active or inactive, orthodox or heterodox. Even when particular bishops are praised, they are usually cast as exceptions—which is surely a sign of the general crisis of authority that afflicts American Catholicism. The Church lost something from the battles of the 1970s to the revelations of the priest scandals in 2002, and though Catholic culture in America may have begun its return, the institutional Church has yet to reclaim much of what it lost.

The 1990s did see some improvement. The Vatican had a glowing reputation in the United States for its role

in the collapse of Soviet domination in Eastern Europe, Cardinal O'Connor was a figure of national stature, and even the Church's old-fashioned political abilities seemed to come back—mostly through the intellectual and rhetorical power of Catholic natural-law analysis. And then came the revelations of the priest scandals.

I was in Washington when the sex-abuse stories broke, involved in the political part of the fight against cloning, and it was like watching a building collapse. On December 1, 2001, Catholics were at the front of the fight: lobbying, testifying to Congress, mobilizing voters, setting the terms of the debate. Two months later, by February 1, 2002, Catholics had essentially disappeared. In the middle of the campaign to force an anti-cloning bill to come to the Senate floor, one bishop told me he didn't dare lobby his senators, for fear they would answer, "Who the hell are you to lecture me on a moral issue?" and rupture their relations forever.

Twenty-five years of the prestige built up by John Paul II and Mother Teresa drained away in an instant. And at every moment since, whenever the bishops have tried to influence public affairs, there has been someone ready to remind us of their sins. In October 2004, Denver's archbishop Charles Chaput encouraged Catholics to vote against pro-abortion politicians, and Maureen Dowd immediately used her column in the *New York Times* to denounce "the shepherds of a Church whose hierarchy bungled the molestation and rape of so many young boys by tolerating it, covering it up, enabling it, excusing it, and paying hush money." How dare they debate "whether John Kerry should be allowed to receive communion"?

The pro-life movement was not exempt from this disdain for the bishops. In his interesting 1997 study, *The Smoke of Satan: Conservative and Traditionalist Dissent in Contemporary American Catholicism*, Michael Cuneo documents pro-lifers' increasing willingness to criticize the bishops publicly: "For the first decade or so following the *Roe* ruling, the bishops were more outspoken on abortion, and more actively engaged in fighting it, than the Catholic leadership of virtually any country in the Western world. . . . By the early 1980s, however, this close connection between movement and hierarchy was starting to show signs of strain."

Much of the anger focused on the archbishop of Chicago, Joseph Bernardin, who issued a call, during a 1983 speech at Fordham University, for Catholics to make the fight against abortion part of a "seamless garment" or "consistent ethic" of social action. To pro-life activists, Cuneo notes, "it seemed that the cardinal was beating a strategic retreat from the anti-abortion position." The reform-minded Bernardin was, at the time,

perhaps the most influential bishop in America: a leader of the Catholic conference in Washington, a man regularly consulted by the Vatican before its appointments of new bishops in the United States, and a favorite of many politicians. But the pro-life movement was furious with him, and since his death in 1996, his reputation has been in decline.

The weakening of respect for the bishops' authority had many causes. Broad sociological factors certainly played a role: the suburbanizing of the old ethnic communities, for example, and the rising suspicion of *any* authority since the end of World War II. Broad ecclesiastical factors did their share as well. Archbishop Gerey claimed the leftist Call to Action was "a good indication of what the people in this country are feeling," while Monsignor De Pauw insisted a national referendum would vindicate his traditionalism. But, in truth, American Catholics generally reacted to the changes after Vatican II with a great shrug—the Great Shrug. If so much had changed today, who knows what will change tomorrow?

Meanwhile, the bishops did not help their own situation. The scandals that broke in 2002 overwhelmingly concerned crimes that had happened during the 1970s and 1980s, at the peak of a peculiar diffidence that had captured the diocesan offices. With so many priests leaving the priesthood, how could the hierarchy crack down on the ones who remained? Besides, after all the dissent on birth control, the bishops seemed embarrassed at the Church's apparent failure to be modern—and the best modern opinion at the time told them that deviant sexuality in the clergy required psychiatric treatment rather than old theological categories such as sin and penance.

The best legal opinion, as well. Lawyers for the Church in those days consistently argued for psychiatric treatments and bureaucratic reassignments, fearing that any ecclesiastical punishment would be an admission of institutional guilt. As the situation grew more and more ungovernable, many bishops seemed to retreat to their role as businessmen in charge of major financial institutions and concerned primarily with public relations and legal liabilities. Ecclesiastically and theologically, that was a horrendous decision, and its huge costs—more than a billion dollars since 2002 in judgments and settlements for priestly abuse—prove it an equally bad financial decision. It is not even good business to concentrate solely on business.

The strangeness of American politics added yet another layer of confusion. Through the 1980s, the majority of American bishops were Democrats—not surprisingly, given that they were drawn from the generations of American Catholics for whom membership

in the Democratic party seemed almost a byproduct of baptism and confirmation.

And yet, while Catholics were still Democrats, Democrats were increasingly less Catholic. In 1971, Fred Dutton—an organizer of Bobby Kennedy's 1968 presidential campaign and a major figure in the party—published *Changing Sources of Power: American Politics in the 1970s*. As the young historian Mark Stricherz notes, "The book acknowledged that 'the Catholic vote' had consistently supported Democratic presidential candidates since the 1930s. Even so, it contended, the 'party's political self-interest' lay in appealing to other constituencies: 'The net effect of these groups in relation to the dynamic of social change has become vastly different from thirty or sixty years ago.'"

Dutton would go on to guide the 1972 McGovern Commission, which effectively transferred power in the Democratic-party conventions from the mostly Catholic blue-collar unions and urban political machines to the upper-middle-class enclaves of the Northeast and the special-interest groups of feminists and minorities. And that, in turn, would lead to the end of the special relationship between the party and Catholicism. Despite the late appearance of the Catholic Sargent Shriver as the Democrats' vice-presidential nominee in 1972, Catholics began deserting the party to vote for Nixon. In the Reagan victories of 1980 and 1984, they increased their flight. And by the elections of 2000 and 2004, Catholics showed no particular party affiliation at all.

There was a long period after 1972, however, in which the bishops were stretched further and further by the changed Democratic party. The new convention platforms made no concessions on any traditional Catholic issue—tax breaks for parochial schools, abortion, euthanasia, church-state relations—but an old marriage such as the one between Catholics and the Democratic party doesn't end in an instant, and the bishops were tugged along in their attempts to remain progressives in good standing with the party.

As Kennedy-era Democrats, they were, for example, embarrassed by the old Tom Dooley kind of support that Catholics had given the Vietnam War. (Hadh't it once been thought a war against godless communism, led by a Catholic administration in Vietnam?) So, too, as members of a patriarchal institution, the bishops seemed helpless in the face of the moral authority claimed by the feminists from the 1970s on. The trouble, really, was that the bishops *wanted* to go along with the turn to the Left, and their inability to do so on the life issues only made them hunger, all the more, to join the leftists on other issues. While the general Catholic population was slowly moving right, many of the bish-

ops were quickly running left—and it ended up making them look even more like political partisans than they had back in their powerful moments with the 1950s Democratic party.

All these factors contributed to the decline of the bishops' reputation, and as their authority faltered, they increasingly hesitated to use it. The effect continues to this day. Take a close look at nearly any diocese in America, and you'll see elements of a new Catholic culture emerging. But it remains consistently thinner than any Catholicism the nation has ever known before, and one of the reasons is that it lacks much of a role for the local bishop. In Orange County, for example, the crisis of authority has grown to become the single most apparent fact about the entire diocese.

VI

Up Highway 73, twenty miles or so from San Juan Capistrano, there's a little church called St. Mary's by the Sea. It varies architecturally from other churches in the diocese: a white clapboard chapel with an enclosed wooden porch—a house, really, distinguished from its Huntington Beach neighbors only by the small cross atop its green roof. But in most ways, St. Mary's seems a typical Catholic parish. Or typical, anyway, for Orange County.

The area has changed since it was known as Reagan Country, the Republicans' suburban bastion between Los Angeles and San Diego. Three million people now live in the county, more than a third of them Catholic: 186,147 registered households in fifty-eight parishes. The influx of Hispanics has altered the religious mix of the entire state, but Orange County has, as well, a large Catholic Vietnamese population. The latest class of priests "represents the cultural diversity and the multi-cultural ministry that are the hallmarks of the Diocese of Orange," proclaimed a press release from Bishop Tod Brown's office in June 2006. In fact, cultural diversity was the least obvious characteristic, as two of the three newly ordained priests were Vietnamese.

Geographically compact, Orange County is nonetheless like most dioceses in this country, with its good, its bad, and its indifferent elements jumbled together. Who can sort them out? There are some nice, average, little American parishes: St. Joseph's out in Santa Ana, for instance, a gray Spanish castle with the red-tile roof almost obligatory for California, a drab but functional interior, and a grade school nearby. And there are the usual fading communities of habitless nuns—historical preservations of the 1970s' goopier moments: the Sisters of St. Joseph, for instance, with their low-slung Center for Spiritual Development, who

protested against President Bush in August 2006 by announcing they would "join together in a dance of universal peace."

The diocese even has its equivalent of a mega-church. In expectation of the separation of Orange from the archdiocese of Los Angeles, St. Columban's in Garden Grove was built in 1967 as a kind of proto-cathedral, seating fifteen hundred. But when the diocese was finally established in 1976, the first bishop, William Johnson, chose instead the four-hundred-seat Holy Family Church as his cathedral, leaving St. Columban's as an oversize oddity: six thousand registered families, and ten thousand people at its Sunday Masses. Bishop Brown had plans to build a large new cathedral, akin to Cardinal Mahony's recent post-modern cathedral in Los Angeles, but the 2005 payment to victims of clerical abuse in Orange County—\$100 million, the largest settlement so far—reportedly scaled back the construction.

Meanwhile, the Norbertine Fathers have prospered with their Silverado abbey and school in the eastern foothills of the diocese. Established in 1958 by refugees from Eastern Europe, St. Michael's Priory was floundering until it took the plunge into modern times, embracing John Paul II's reading of Vatican II and adopting as its motto "not rejecting what is good in the old, and taking what is good in the new." The canonry now has forty-three priests and twenty-four candidates preparing for the priesthood.

That's not to say everyone applauds. One Call to Action activist recently denounced the success of the Norbertines as a stumbling block to reform, a group of angry traditionalists attacked them for allowing the adopted child of homosexuals to attend the school, and the attitude of diocesan officials seems, at the least, ambivalent. But their chant-laden, half-Latin services are reverent and handsome, and the priory's Masses are overflowing. Indeed, according to the abbey newsletter, St. Michael's will soon be moving to larger buildings, since "each year the abbey turns away vocations and the school turns away qualified students due to lack of space."

Down on the beach, only thirty miles west of St. Michael's, St. Mary's by the Sea might be in a different country. New pastors sometimes forget that, unless things are very bad, parishioners *hate* change; they want their church as it was to be their church as it is. But when he arrived as the parish administrator in 2005, Father Martin Tran immediately launched into reform, beginning with the elimination of the Sunday morning Latin Mass his predecessor had said for years. Nearly all the three hundred parishioners who regularly attended that Mass, one fifth of the

parish, promptly left—many of them badly catechized enough to head off to Our Lady Help of Christians in Grove City, a strange little schismatic chapel whose only attraction appears to be its Tridentine rite.

Worse may be what happened with the parishioners who frequented the English Masses. The diocese has always had something of an anything-goes reputation: Native American blessings offered at San Juan Capistrano, liturgical dance at St. Angela Merici, interreligious services in consecrated spaces—all in a diocese with regular Latin Masses and the Norbertines' abbey as well. Fr. Tran, however, was determined to change his mildly traditionalist parish into a fully liberal one, and, armed with memos from the diocesan office, he decided to outlaw kneeling at Mass.

By the time the *Los Angeles Times* got hold of the story—with an embarrassing front-page spread in the May 28, 2006, issue—“at least two altar boys, the parish altar-servers coordinator, and three members of the parish council” had been “dismissed from their duties for kneeling at the wrong time.” The situation soon grew even more envenomed. There were parishioners who weren't just kneeling but *kneeling with intent*—to embarrass their pastor and his supporters. And there were other parishioners who were *refusing* to kneel in the same way—to be noticed, to make a comment, to take a stand.

One pratfall followed another. Fr. Tran used the church bulletin to thunder that his flock was in “rebellion, grave disobedience, and mortal sin,” and the kneelers issued at least fifteen different flyers to parishioners and enlisted Catholic bloggers to mock their pastor on the Web. In response, he sent letters to fifty-five parishioners, ordering them to stay away. Only last-minute intervention by a worried lawyer in the parish kept Fr. Tran from handing out a church bulletin that listed the fifty-five names. Not that it helped him much, for the incensed parishioners found the discarded copies in the trash and promptly distributed them.

When Bishop Tod Brown finally got around to addressing the situation, it had deteriorated beyond easy repair. Brown had come out of St. John's Seminary in Camarillo, California—not the best sign for a contemporary bishop, as more than 10 percent of the graduates since 1950 have been accused of sexual molestation, including a third of the classes of 1966 and 1972. Nonetheless, he seems by most accounts a steady leader: a little squishy on homosexuality, maybe, and more than a little unwilling to deal with doctrinal disputes and irregularities at Mass. His very public distribution of Communion to the pro-abortion congresswoman Loretta Sanchez at Servite High School in

2004—and his allowing her to campaign from local pulpits—caused real agitation in the diocese. Still, Brown had finished his first posting as bishop, in Boise, Idaho, with the reputation of someone who could reorganize financially troubled institutions, and it was always as a responsible administrator that he presented himself.

Certainly, that's how he is known to his California friends, particularly Cardinal Mahony of Los Angeles and Cardinal Levada, formerly the archbishop of San Francisco and now prefect of the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, with whom he regularly vacations. The \$100 million settlement for abuse cases he signed in January 2005 proves, once again, the bad business of paying attention only to business, but Orange County has at least put a ceiling on the costs of the pending lawsuits.

In the end, though, you can see the limits of a bishop who acts primarily as an administrator, detached from the feeling in his diocese, with Brown's April 2006 visit to St. John the Baptist in Costa Mesa—where he was caught on videotape yanking repeatedly at a woman kneeling before him, tugging on her arm and blouse to get her to stand.

You can see it even more in the saga of Rod Stephens. Father Rod was prominent for years in Orange County: director of the liturgical office that issued the anti-kneeling memos, head of evangelization for the diocese, organizer of the Jubilee 2000 project, the bishop's expert on architectural renovation, and a man appearing openly at events with his male escort. “What do you want from me?” Bishop Brown plaintively asked when local Catholics objected—and when they asked if he was responsible for Stephens' behavior as a priest, the tired bishop insisted, “No, I'm not.”

Or, at least, that's what the angry parishioners *say* happened at their September 2001 meeting with the bishop. To follow the Rod Stephens story is to suffer a kind of motion-sickness, your sympathies batted back and forth until you have no sympathy left for anyone.

You start outraged at a priest who cohabits so blatantly that he sends out Christmas cards that read, “For Chanukah, Christmas, and the New Year, All the Best: From Our Digs to Yours, Howard and Rod.” But then you learn that it all came out because his own family snitched on him to the conservative Catholic press. Your outrage returns when you find out his family had approached him privately first, and he told them, “The bishop knows about it and so does Cardinal Mahony, and they approve.” But your teeth start to ache when you discover the relatives went on to hire a private detective to dig up dirt on the priest.

And then you see that the dirt included \$10,000-a-ticket vacation cruises taken by Fr. Rod and his companion.

Along the way, you are exposed to moments like the reported explanation, from the bishop's notoriously foot-in-mouth spokesman, that if the diocese tried to control its actively homosexual clergy, "there would be so few priests left we'd have to turn it over to lay people to run it." Or the memo from diocesan officials during Fr. Stephens' tenure that insisted teen-chastity programs are suitable only for "homeschoolers and fundamentalists." Or the right-wing protesters, complete with banners, who paraded for photographers in front of the bishop's residence. Or the letter from the vocations director of the diocese, which denounced Mother Angelica's EWTN television network for "religious intolerance and arrogance" and labeled the Franciscan University of Steubenville, a conservative Catholic college in Ohio, "a pathetic organization of bitter people."

On and on the story goes, the whole thing enough to make you want to crawl into bed and pull the covers over your head. This is Catholic life in America? This is Catholic culture?

In 2004, Stephens left the priesthood. The old-boy network kicked in and found him a consulting position at San Juan Capistrano, but it was never a good fit. The mission aims at historical accuracy, while Stephens tends toward the modern stripping-of-the-altars style you can see, for instance, in the work he did at Sacred Heart, a church in nearby Ocean Beach. And once upset parishioners started reporting that the ex-priest was receiving \$300 an hour from parish funds, the mission and the diocese quickly retreated, insisting Stephens had been involved only in a "preparatory committee meeting."

The man is still around on the fringes of Catholic life in Southern California. Though he chose his lifestyle over his Church, the priesthood is not something one ever exactly gets over. Catholic fiction used to be filled with the character of a "spoilt priest," a broken figure who had somehow ruined the vocation that continues to haunt him. It isn't a category that people talk about much anymore, but it sometimes still seems to fit.

There was Rod Stephens, for instance, in the news reports about Jane Via, one of the women ordained by Roman Catholic Womenpriests (the group that had a brief media swirl in August 2006 for its attempted creation of eight priestesses on a chartered boat cruise in Pittsburgh). When she returned to California to hold her first service, at her side, according to the *San Diego Union-Tribune*, was Rod Stephens, "who resigned his faculties as a Roman Catholic priest in the Orange

County diocese in 2004 but still considers himself a priest."

There's something sad about that line, like a character in a Graham Greene or maybe a James T. Farrell novel, defrocked and disgraced, who after a few drinks starts to mumble about how, by God, he doesn't care what anybody says, he's still a priest—louder and louder, while the anxious barmaid maneuvers him toward the door. But maybe the greater sadness is how dated the entire situation in Orange County seems. The whole diocese has a fossilized, fly-in-amber feeling to it.

And yet, well—what is the solution? A few years ago, I was out in Southern California, visiting a school in Orange County. I can't remember the name of the parish to which the students took me for Mass, but what has stayed with me ever since is the conversation as they drove me back to the hotel. Talk about the homily's content didn't interest them; even talk about the homily's *lack* of content didn't interest them. "I just kind of tune it out," the driver said, and the others all agreed. "I just go to church for confession, to pray, and to take Communion," added the young woman in the back. "At least the priests can do that."

These were *serious* Catholic kids—daily communicants, pro-life marchers, soup-kitchen volunteers, members of perpetual-adoration societies. They were showing off a little for their guest, no doubt: taking stronger positions than they actually feel, arguing for the joy of arguing, the way college students do. It was revealing, however, that when one of them shyly mentioned the Tridentine Mass at the renegade chapel in Garden Grove, the others shouted her down.

Sure, they agreed, pretty Masses are better than ugly ones, and they all preferred high-churchy smells and bells to guitar services and liturgical dance: the things their parents' generation, poor souls, fondly imagined would "engage today's youth." But the radical traditionalists seemed cut from the same cloth as the radical revisionists—and the students dismissed all that kind of 1970s stuff as simultaneously boring and infuriating: the self-obsession and self-glorification of the two sides that, between them, had wrecked Catholic culture in this country. We live with a million aborted babies a year, daily scandals of corruption in the Church, millions of uncatechized Catholic children, and *this* is what those tired old biddies are still squabbling over?

"You remember how, you know, the old hippie types used to say, 'Never trust anyone over thirty'? Well, they were right. Only it was their own generation they were talking about," the thin, quiet one in the back announced as we pulled up to the hotel. "You can see it clearly out here in California. That whole generation of Catholics in America, basically everybody formed

before 1978, is screwed up. Left, Right, whatever. . . . The best of them were failures, and the worst of them were monsters."

VII

There's something disturbing about that line, although one hears it often enough. Last year, a young seminarian used a version to dismiss the revelations of the priest scandals—day after day of news reports about heart-wrenching vileness: "Yes, yes," he told me, "it was sickening and evil, but what did anybody expect? Those are just the worst examples of everything that generation did wrong."

This quick, irritated *impatience* seems common in the emerging Catholic culture. You find it in the parishioners of the Polish Dominicans working at Columbia University, and in the conservatives gathered around the political theorist Robert George at Princeton. For that matter, it is present among the graduate students at such places as Notre Dame and Boston College, and among the younger theology professors around the country. The public figures of the new culture—the Catholic lawyers, magazine writers, and think-tank analysts—have it in spades: an intolerance, an exasperation, with everything that preoccupied an entire generation of American Catholics.

For the development of a new Catholicism, this doesn't look the most-promising start. Rich local cultures may produce great works, but few people in the United States have that kind of cultural wealth anymore. Certainly not many Catholics. The number of Americans who grew up in a profoundly Catholic setting is smaller than it ever has been before—which creates a problem for a new culture. If Catholicism is something elected rather than received, can Catholics achieve what earlier cultures did?

Their children, perhaps, will come from a thick-enough world that they can write the kind of strong Catholic novels, make the kind of strong Catholic art, prior ages knew. But in the meantime, a rebellion against rebellion doesn't escape the problems of rebellion, and a chosen tradition is never quite the same as an inherited one.

Still, in at least one sense, these Catholics seem right to reject the battles of the recent past. The greatest work of John Paul II may prove his reintegration of Vatican II into the history of the Catholic Church: a swerve, a changing of the trajectory that both sides in the 1970s had assumed could not be altered. Far too many in those days believed the Second Vatican Council had definitively broken the Catholic Church from its past. Whether they wept or cheered, whether they

were traditionalists or spirit-of-Vatican-II reformers, they acted as though the new Church were no longer in continuity with the old Church.

In serious Catholic intellectual circles, at least, who makes that assumption of discontinuity anymore? Patristics has returned as a prestigious field for graduate students, philosophical analysis routinely grapples with St. Thomas Aquinas again, and literary criticism has begun once more to work with something like a canon of Catholic books. What's more, the centrality to the new culture of the moral stand against abortion has the great benefit of turning the energy back out toward the world—the *call to action* that Paul VI demanded, finally answered after thirty-five years.

It would be an exaggeration to say opposition to abortion was the sole signal that a Catholic culture could return to the United States. The enthusiasm and hopefulness created when John Paul II became pope in 1978 was vital. With the entire world's media following in his charismatic wake, with even Southern Baptists cheering that the Church had a "pope who sure knows how to pope," it was hard not to feel that perhaps, after all, being Catholic signaled something distinctive.

Then, too, there was the intellectual base—the sense that membership in the Church actually had content—that came with the completion in 1992 of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. The *Catechism* remains indispensable, John Paul II later insisted, "in order that all the richness of the teaching of the Church following the Second Vatican Council could be preserved in a new synthesis and be given a new direction."

At the time, these signals of something new were often seen through the worn old 1970s lenses. With the *Catechism* came the predictable rejections, like the galvanic twitchings of irritated nerves. Father Thomas J. Reese of the Jesuit journal *America* cried, "Is a catechism for the universal church necessary or possible? . . . Can any statement of the Christian faith stand outside of history and culture?" And from the Right, Michel Simoulin of the schismatic Society of Saint Pius X raged, "The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* is . . . not Catholic. It expresses the conciliar ecstasy before the splendor of man and can only seduce the poor Christians severed for the past thirty years from all serious doctrinal formation."

And yet, even back then, now more than a decade ago, most of these attacks on John Paul II and the *Catechism* had a sadly dated feel. Left or right, the criticisms missed the curve in the road, as though they were determined to follow the old trajectory off the cliff while the rest of the Church swung off in a new direction.

This is not to say everything is suddenly rosy. The American hierarchy has recovered little of the respect it once possessed, the bricks-and-mortar institutional Church in the United States will continue to suffer from the payouts for the priest scandals, and many Catholic colleges and hospitals seem locked in the bad decisions they made during the 1970s about their self-definition and future. Any analysis that shows brightness among American Catholics can be inverted to show plenty of darkness.

But consider how things used to be. A few years ago, the journalist Robert Blair Kaiser published *Clerical Error: A True Story*, a book that accused Fr. Malachi Martin of seducing his wife and breaking up his marriage during the Second Vatican Council. Kaiser was a correspondent for *Time* magazine, while Martin was the private secretary of Cardinal Bea in Rome. Kaiser needed help with technical points of Catholicism and Roman intrigue, and Martin needed—well, according to Kaiser, Martin needed an entry into American publishing, an outlet for Vatican rumors he wanted printed, and a chance at Kaiser's wife.

Clerical Error is an odd book, its authorial self-obsession and downright weirdness making its accusations hard to believe. But as a description of that generation, it really can't be bettered. Before his death in 1999, Martin would move to New York and become a best-selling traditionalist of ambiguous clerical standing. Kaiser would go on to publish volume after volume: each demanding ever-more-unlikely reforms, each raging against the Church for its failure to be sufficiently like Robert Blair Kaiser. If this is what Catholicism was like in those days, we are better off without it.

Late this spring, a friend called from Orange County, chattering excitedly about how she had just seen a swallow at the Mission San Juan Capistrano. Only one, and she couldn't find where it had made its nest. Still, there it was, flittering through the ruins of the Great Stone Church with the strange, carefree flight the birds always seem to have: a smooth coasting, interrupted with sudden swoops and sideslips, like a hang-glider with the hiccups. "Maybe they will return," she said. "Maybe they really will." *All the mission bells will ring, / The chapel choir will sing, / When the swallows come back to Capistrano.* [FT]

Joseph

Do I displease you, Brothers
 Oh the dictate of these dreams
 Is not mine; nor what is given me
 Love is the dominion, Rachel Mother
 And the robe a rainbow
 From my Father's fingers, our Father

Samuel Menashe

BOOKS IN REVIEW

Culture of Death

SACRED ORDER / SOCIAL ORDER,
VOL. 1, MY LIFE AMONG THE
DEATHWORKS: ILLUSTRATIONS OF
THE AESTHETICS OF AUTHORITY
by PHILIP RIEFF
University of Virginia Press,
234 pages, \$34.95

Reviewed by Stephen H. Webb

READING PHILIP RIEFF is hard work. In *Sacred Order/Social Order: My Life Among the Deathworks*, he develops a deceptively simple typology that takes some getting used to, and he uses it to rummage his way through modern Western culture like a man possessed. Brilliant insights are mixed with the kind of ranting one usually hears from a faculty office down the hall after hours.

Rieff boldly divides human history into three cultural epochs. This is a sly appropriation of the language of the three worlds of economic development—terminology many academics try to avoid because it sounds condescending. Rieff has no such compunction.

Rieff's first cultural world roughly corresponds to ancient paganism. The second cultural world is characterized by the Jewish insistence that social interdictions are divinely commanded. The third cultural world is harder to describe, but think of Joyce's gleefully impenetrable irreverence in *Finnegan's Wake* combined with the homeless Ahab's single-minded quest for death in Melville's *Moby Dick*.

In other words, the third culture is composed of everything that infuriates the Freudian scholar who

famously launched the critique of what he called "therapeutic man."

Cultures, in Rieff's definition, function to translate sacred order into social orders. This process is not without a struggle, but when it is successful, culture renders the armed enforcement of social norms unnecessary. What the first and second cultures have in common is their belief that our identity comes from a vertical axis of authority; we cling to powers above in order to keep from falling into the horizontal heap of permissive indifference below. The third culture, which Rieff argues is unique in human history, beckons us to jump.

Rieff, who was eighty-three when he died July 1, 2006, published his last major work, *Fellow Teachers*, in 1973. Those who remember him for the ascetic quality of his prose will be sur-

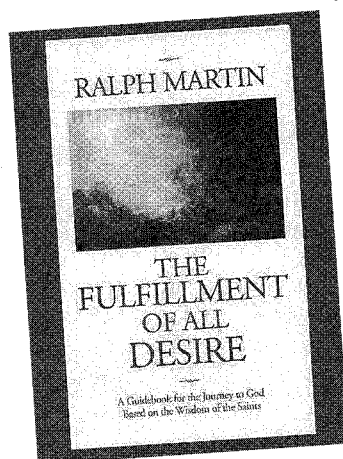
prised to find so much promiscuous moralizing in this first volume of a trilogy that was more or less finished at his death. Rieff declares that third-world elites de-create culture in the deluded hope that social order will take care of itself. His term for their cultural productions is *deathworks*, and he means it literally. As much as he often blames Freud, he is still beholden to a fundamentally Freudian framework—and the third culture is the revenge of the death instinct.

In fact, one of Rieff's most original lines of analysis is his interpretation of Freud's master concept of repression. Repression is a puzzling psychological state in which one simultaneously knows and does not know something. Rieff shows how Freud repressed the truth in all repressions, which is that the self can lie to itself only if it answers to a

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STEPHEN H. WEBB is professor of religion and philosophy at Wabash College. His recent books include *American Providence*, *The Divine Voice*, *Good Eating*, and *Taking Religion to School*.

higher authority. Otherwise, how would we know that the truth is not just another, more creative lie? Freud, whom Rieff calls "the greatest post-Jew of the third culture," endowed the psychoanalyst with religious authority in order to abolish the interdictory culture of Judaism. He spelled out his intentions in his greatest deathwork, *Moses and Monotheism*, where he enacts the literary murder of the greatest lawgiver.

The attempt to unmask systematically every repression represses the way third-world elites have not come to terms with their dependence on authority. Suspicion is just another form of repression, which is why, as Rieff puts it, the one kind of knowledge forbidden to us today is of sacred order. What passes for religion in the age of suspicion is the sacred landscape of subjectivity. In Rieff's biting prose, "Particular interiors are to be examined with the meticulous attention that was devoted to the art

of the interior in the Dutch and Flemish schools of seventeenth-century painting." Nonetheless, our inner lives cannot sustain such cultural weight, even when we treat the petty as if it were profound.

Without sacred order, the death instinct is set loose. Rieff thus connects the *Kulturkampf* struggle between second- and third-world cultures to the Holocaust. Third-world culture can never defeat the second world on its own grounds, since it rejects the authority of reason as well as the reasonableness of tradition, so it resorts to the shooting war that culture is meant to prevent. Third-world culture is, in fact, anti-culture, so it lacks the resources to enforce order without violence. It is also essentially anti-Jewish, since Judaism represents the unmovable and absolute nature of divine interdictions.

Much of this book is taken up with analyses of how modern deathworks,

from Duchamp to Wallace Stevens, illustrate Rieff's recurring themes. He acknowledges borrowing his motif analysis from the Swedish Lutheran theologian Anders Nygren, but those who know Nygren's work will recognize a deeper affinity. Like Nygren, Rieff adamantly resists mixing the divine order of *agape*, or sacrificial love, with the natural fecundity of eros. Rieff is a thinker of divisive spaces.

Culture occupies the space between sacred and social order, and the whole point of culture is to grant each individual his own unique space. We can go up and down the vertical ladder of authority, but we cannot go very far toward each other. Third-world cultures corrupt sex by blurring the boundaries of personal identity. "There is always a space between lovers, however close they may be. The pathos of that space, of that necessary and humanizing distance between lovers, is at once its ethos."

Two works by Michelangelo illustrate second-world spacing and its third-world negation. *The Creation of Adam* shows how the space between individuals has its origin in the gap between the hands of God and Adam. "In that apparently little space is all the space in which all humanity lives." The unfinished *Rondanini Pietà* shows Mary melting into her son, thus substituting "the collective person where the sacred self once was."

Third-world culture has opted for the *Rondanini Pietà* rather than *The Creation of Adam*. Though the gap between the hands of God and Adam is slight, third-world elites feel confined by their creator. Their rebellion takes the form of a "transgression of forgetfulness," which explains why they are pro-choice rather than pro-creation. The abortion of memory is the necessary precondition for the third-world "deodorized death cultus."

The critique of abortion is central to Rieff's argument, but the third-

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world elite will find plenty of other reasons to dismiss this book. Ordaining women is anti-Christian, Rieff writes. "Homosexuality as a social movement is not a movement of love but a movement of hatred and indifference." "In America, there are special armies to attack the canon, including young blacks persuaded of a racial mystique." Rieff's hyperbolic prose is not for the rhetorically timid.

The problems with this book, however, go deeper than these polemical excesses. By juxtaposing so many cultural artifacts and analyzing them in an abstract manner, Rieff risks using a third-world method to defend his idea of second-world culture. Even more problematic is his argument that the anticultural thrust of the third world is unprecedented. That gives the third-world elites too much credit. Far from being uniquely *negational* (one of Rieff's favorite words), third-world culture has continued the discourses of truth and tradition. Third-world theoreticians prattle about ambiguity, pluralism, and undecidability, but they are as committed to a sacred order and its authority as any traditionalist. And their sacred order legitimates a quite effective social order. Just criticize gender feminism, pantheistic environmentalism, economic collectivism, or racial victimization, and their social order will close down upon you.

Rieff's cultural apologetics sometimes gets the better of him, so that it is not clear what he is defending. Does Rieff think that all second-world traditions will (or can) unite in order to conduct counterstrikes against the third-world elites? Or would the consolidation of second-world traditions in a united front simply signal surrender to the homogenizing forces of the coming cultural wasteland? Rieff can sound like a cultural minimalist who is more interested in the idea of culture than its particular permutations. He can also sound close to despair, as

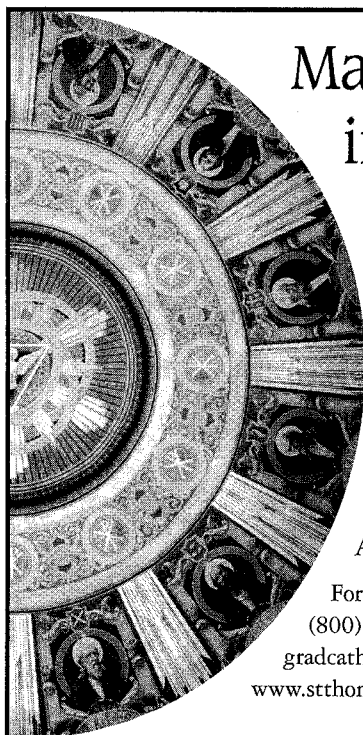
when he writes, near the end of this book, "Silence is now the preferred form of prophecy." Although he can be classified as a conservative, Rieff has no interest in defending the glory days of Christendom. "Sacred history never repeats itself." Yet he can say that, when he hears a Bach Mass, "I am an honorary Christian."

As for his Judaism, Rieff tells us that his father was stripped of his name by a petty official at Ellis Island in 1921, and that his new name meant nothing to him. In seeking to restore it, Rieff writes like a desperate man in search of a patrimony that is lost to history. I hope that the future volumes of this trilogy show that Rieff found cultural identity and personal peace.

IN THE MEANTIME, THIS book stands as a declaration of war. Ever since James Davison Hunter, who supplies the helpful introduction to this book, wrote his now classic treatise *Culture*

Wars: The Struggle to Define America (1991), sociologists have scurried to disprove his thesis by demonstrating that ordinary Americans are not that divided. These experts in the art of distributing surveys claim to find large tracts of moral common ground, but what they are probably picking up is the politeness of the American people, as well as their general tendency to distrust the abstruse bickering of the cultural elite. Assessing the culture wars by surveying those who are uninterested in culture would be a good joke if it were not such a frequent methodological ploy in the sociological literature.

Rieff's book shows that the war over culture has dropped off the media map only because we are still in its earliest and most bewildering stages. He leads us to expect this war to heat up, if only because what meager culture we have left makes the battle over the identity of Western civilization truly unprecedented.



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MAKING OF A NATION
by JON MEACHAM
Random House, 416 pages, \$23.95

Reviewed by Michael Novak

THERE SEEMS TO BE a real panic out there in Secular Land. Some endow the "Christian Right" with dreadful mythical intent to destroy the Bill of Rights—which would be odd, since the Baptists of Virginia were the first champions of the Bill of Rights, when they refused to pledge their votes for Congress to James Madison until he renounced his public opposition to a Bill of Rights and promised to fight for it, and especial-

MICHAEL NOVAK, with his daughter Jana, is the author, most recently, of *Washington's God* (Basic Books).

ly for the First Amendment securing religious and civil liberties.

Others tremble because powerful evidence shows that a very large majority of the American people learn to think morally by studying biblical principles and narratives, not Darwinian materialism. More, those who attend church regularly have been departing from the Democratic party and coalescing around new Republican leaders. Secular intellectuals of the Left are frightened by their image of the Christian Right, mainstream Protestants despise the Christian Right, and a good many liberal Catholics (including bishops) condescend to it. Contempt for evangelicals seems to be the last universally accepted bigotry.

Still, a good many responsible and serious liberals have taken it upon themselves to warn secular Americans that in their opposition to religion they are going too far. The secularizers really are in danger of losing the country—and for reasons that are entirely avoidable. In *American Gospel*, for instance, Jon Meacham directly confronts this new turn of events. Meacham, the managing editor of *Newsweek*, has

readers of the secular persuasion most in view. Thus, he makes much of the secular hero Thomas Jefferson—while also showing how right up to the manner of his dying he was a far more religious man, and closer to the faith of his Christian forebears, than most secular professors of law, philosophy, or political science today would be allowed to be.

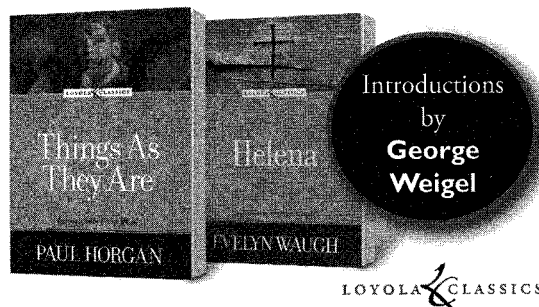
Meacham's main thesis is that secularizers should recognize that the genius of America lies in its balance among faith, freedom, and common sense. That balance is what Meacham means by the unique, historically distinctive "American gospel"—a system of "truths we hold" that do not exactly represent orthodox Judaism or Christianity but are far closer to those founts than to the secular materialism of our own day. Meacham is, in this way, an apostle of the "American gospel" to those Americans who nowadays pitch their tents outside the boundaries of biblical faith.

BY CONTRAST, DAVID Holmes, a longtime professor of religious studies at the College of William and Mary and author of *A Brief History*

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of the *Episcopal Church*, is an apostle to the mainstream Protestant churches of America. In *The Faiths of the Founding Fathers*, he is eager to show that today's evangelical churches were not the formative influences on the Founders that some today imagine they were. Holmes is aware that secular readers will be looking in on his book, of course, and he writes in a way that all will understand. Yet his main point is that there were *many* Christian faiths among the Founders, and the subtlety and nuance of the faiths of the Founders—even when all, or nearly all, could in some sense be called Christian—need to be more clearly recognized in the nation's self-understanding.

Meacham begins his story on that day in 1775 when George Washington rode out of Philadelphia to take command of the Continental Army. At the religious service before his departure, the preacher at Christ Church voiced a challenge certain to warm Washington's heart: "Religion and liberty must flourish or fall together in America." Religious liberty, Washington often said, was the primary motive that drove him onto the field of battle.

Even fifty years later, the first thing that most struck Tocqueville on his visit to America in 1831 was "its religious aspect." This aspect was, if anything, even more visible in the 1770s than in the 1830s, Holmes writes. The close conjunction of religion and liberty in the minds of Americans of all ranks was then and still remains the most distinctive aspect of American life. On this, Meacham and Holmes are fully agreed.

Meacham and Holmes are also at pains to note that most of the Founders eschewed evangelical "enthusiasm," few spoke of a "personal relationship with Jesus Christ," and nearly all preferred a fairly philosophical language about God and the things of God. This

more abstract language about God seemed more in harmony with the language of the science of that time, and with the political philosophy of John Locke and Algernon Sidney, Cicero and Aristotle.

NONETHELESS, THE MINDS of most of the Founders, even the least orthodox among them, had been formed by the Bible, and virtually all quoted from Scripture much more than they

quoted from any other author. Even the least orthodox among them, such as Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin (the two outliers in this respect), wrote frequently of God, Judgment Day, and Providence. All held with the Declaration that all men "are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights," and with Jefferson's personal aphorism that "the God who gave us life gave us liberty at the same time."

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Consider that the opening words of the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom announced quite starkly: "Whereas Almighty God hath created the mind free . . ."

For Holmes and Meacham alike, the by-now conventional notion that the Founders were purely men

of the Enlightenment does not satisfy the evidence. Yes, the Founders sometimes took up such themes as common sense and limited government and religious liberty in the language of Enlightenment thinkers. But they also strongly believed that, while conscience and religious liber-

ty must be inviolable, and church and state ought to be separate, nevertheless, government still has the duty to support religion, by one method or another.

"Whatever may be conceded to the influence of refined education on minds of peculiar structure," Washington wrote, the morals required for republican government depend, for most people, on religious cultivation. Most people learn their morals intermixed with the narratives, symbols, and disciplines of religion. This is as true today as it was then—indeed, in past ages, philosophers held it to be a truism.

Meacham is particularly good at rejecting the conventional term "civil religion" in favor of his own useful notion of "public religion," a term he borrows from Franklin. By "public religion" he means the pub-

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lic's belief in the sacredness of conscience, the importance of religious liberty, the link between religion and republican virtues, and the necessity of these virtues for the faithful and steady workings of our Constitution. Furthermore, religion—or at least Judaism and Christianity—limits the state (“Give to Caesar what is Caesar’s, and to God what is God’s”) and is a barrier against totalitarian government (as mere secularism has proved not to be). Such religions also inculcate an almost religious sense of obligation to defend liberty at home and, at times, around the world.

Meacham faults Rousseau’s “civil religion” as artificial and man-made, and Robert Bellah’s for lacking in critical bite. Yet he takes Lincoln’s phrase “an almost-chosen nation” to be a neat summary of the American gospel. He thinks of a “public religion” of this type as a way of criticizing any stage of “civil religion” that falls short of such transcendental ideals as liberty and justice for all. These ideals are “transcendental” in the sense of always failing of full achievement and yet always to be strived for.

Holmes is immensely useful for giving information about the many different faiths and philosophies extant in the complex America of the founding era. According to the federal census of 1790, he reports, there were only 1,243 Jews in America and thirty thousand Catholics, among some three million citizens. For Catholics, the largest concentrations were in Maryland and Pennsylvania, especially Philadelphia. There were enough Jews in Charleston, New York, Philadelphia, Newport, Savannah, and Richmond to build synagogues. That three of these synagogues were in the South may confound contemporary expectations.

Holmes also offers a lengthy discussion of deism in its many variations in the America of the 1770s, including tendencies that many who

thought of themselves as orthodox shared. At least the males among them did. One of Holmes’ most brilliant sections addresses why women were so much less attracted to deism, and men at that time so prone to it. For one thing, Holmes offers some brief portraits of leading women of the founding period and their tangibly orthodox faith, often markedly more so than that of their husbands and sons. Women were closer to the mysteries of life and death, he opines, and among themselves their conversations about such matters were more intimate and familiar than “male talk.” Further, their letters and diaries display imaginations and emotions much more engaged by the biblical narratives than by abstract philosophical discourse.

Holmes also includes some wonderful vignettes about the least-orthodox Christians among the Founders, and some of the most. This is a good step toward the project I called for in *On Two Wings*, a complete picture of the religious life of the top one hundred Founders, including the eighty-nine signers of the Declaration and/or the Constitution, plus other leaders in that world, such as Abigail Adams, Thomas Paine, and George Mason.

Both books cover a lot of ground in relatively few pages, so their portraits of individuals and events are necessarily abbreviated. At many points, when I knew a lot about a given individual, series of events, or set of ideas, I sometimes winced at large generalizations or descriptive arrows that did not hit the target. But I found both books surprisingly congenial, thoughtful, and informative. Where I cannot agree with one or the other of the authors, or both—on important details about the faith of George Washington, for example—further discussion seems likely to be cordial and mutually helpful. In short, both books, different in intention though they be, well reward time spent in their company.

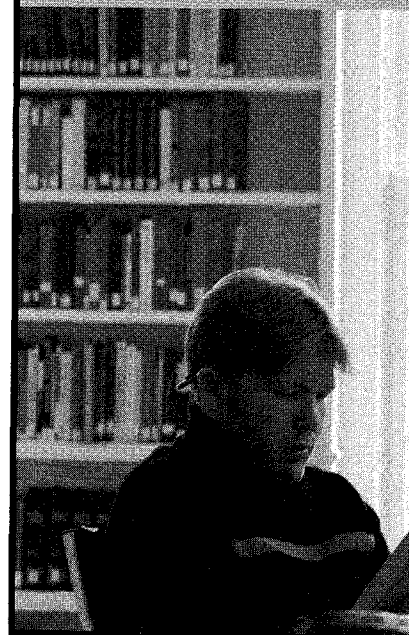
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Sullivan's Travels

THE CONSERVATIVE SOUL: HOW WE LOST IT, HOW TO GET IT BACK
by ANDREW SULLIVAN
HarperCollins, 304 pages, \$25.95

Reviewed by Timothy Fuller

ANDREW SULLIVAN'S MOST evident theme is that there are two kinds of conservatism struggling with each other: Sullivan's kind and the perilous kind that is the nemesis of all that is good.

The bad kind, "fundamentalist conservatism," combines a rigid, puritanical, and self-righteous psyche—instantiated in the Republican

TIMOTHY FULLER is the former president of the Michael Oakeshott Association and co-editor of *The Intellectual Legacy of Michael Oakeshott*. He teaches political philosophy at Colorado College.

party under George W. Bush—with the "theoconservatism" he assigns to such people as Richard John Neuhaus, George Weigel, Robert George (and natural-law theorists in general), and James Dobson. Today's Republican party, he argues, is perhaps the first fundamentally religious party in American history.

Sullivan signed on in the 1980s to a conservatism he thought emphasized freedom rather than virtue. Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher are his political heroes, while his intellectual heroes are Montaigne and Michael Oakeshott, since they exemplify—Sullivan thinks—a skeptical, detached, and indeed an inclusive view of the human condition.

Fundamentalism, Sullivan argues, "purposely and relentlessly forces an unalterable, precise, external truth into the center of a person's life." Fundamentalism is not a specific

doctrine but a "psyche" or "mind-set," a "fearful insistence on a faith in all its particulars, and an equally clear sense of those who are saved and those who are not." Fundamentalism insists that one must embrace "complete purity . . . utter truth in every particular, to avoid evil at all times." Fundamentalism endorses a Manichean universe and is always tempted by totalitarian impulses.

Sullivan's vitriolic attack on the Catholic Church, which has, he insists, retreated from the true spirit of Vatican II, is a complementary theme. According to Sullivan, an increasingly fundamentalist Vatican emerged in "the latter days of the papacy of John Paul II and the enormous influence of Joseph Ratzinger," and it "pointed to a subtle revocation of the Second Vatican Council's concession to the claims of individual conscience." "How many times have



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you heard a pope talk about his own errors? Or an Islamist mullah, for that matter?"

His critique of the Church is integral to his political agenda. Sullivan understands himself to be engaged in an intramural struggle among conservatives for the soul of conservatism. Of course, Sullivan's agenda, which includes liberalized abortion and gay rights, could also be identified as liberal, at home in the Democratic party, where it is not unknown to assert, as Sullivan does, that Christian fundamentalism is a "milder counterpart" to Islamic fundamentalism in expressing its disgust and rage "at court-imposed racial integration, abortion rights, and homosexual equality." In truth, political liberalism is perceptible throughout the book.

On foreign policy, Sullivan is bitterly opposed to the war in Iraq,

which he originally supported. He is now disillusioned about its prosecution, fears that American domestic liberty is threatened, and angry with himself for not seeing from the start these pitfalls that result from a "fundamentalist mindset."

In a way, though, what Sullivan ultimately seeks is a worldview that looks beyond party disputes, perhaps even beyond politics, a conservatism acquiescent in the reality, as he conceives it, of the human condition. Sullivan does defend the resurgence of conservative attitudes as a proper response to a widespread sense of the loss of tradition and as resistance to the rationalization of modern life through social engineering.

The proper response to these developments is, he argues, skeptical restraint and a minimal politics that emphasizes freedom rather than virtue. By contrast, the fundamental-

ism he rejects, in its zeal for virtue and perfecting the world, ends up serving the fashion for innovation and social engineering that conservatism is supposed to resist.

There are several difficulties with his argument. One difficulty is that, as he defines "fundamentalism," it could include almost everyone who is a traditional Christian going back to St. Paul himself. Sullivan never says directly that Christianity has been distorted from the beginning, but there are no positive remarks about the Pauline heritage. It appears that he thinks the gospel of Jesus is concealed by the Christianity of Paul. Since most Christians historically have shared the convictions of the Pauline epistles, this surely subjects any appeal to tradition to a severe tension.

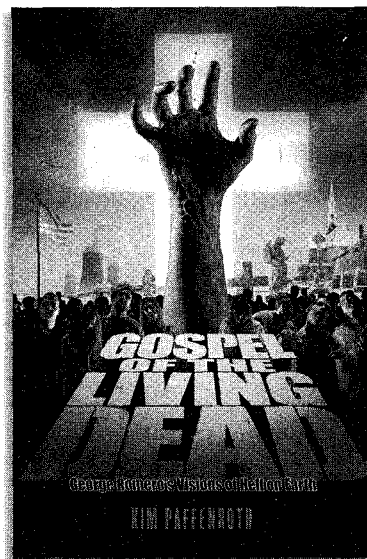
Yet Sullivan's appeal to tradition is selective. Traditional Christians will

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not be convinced that they are “fundamentalists” because they wish to conserve an inheritance they believe to be true. Moreover, one might think that traditional Christians are among those most perceptive of totalitarian impulses and most resistant to the claims of Caesar. John

Paul II, who was both instrumental in undermining communism and wildly popular, while thoroughly traditional, is the obvious case in point.

A related difficulty, illustrated by reference to John Paul II, lies in the fact that Sullivan has no discussion

of “orthodoxy,” a word that is not in his vocabulary. His is a Christianity of informality and sentiment. His analysis of Christianity tends to be ahistorical, in that he views everything from the issues of the present moment. It is true that he refers to historical events and past thinkers, but they do not seem to speak back to him. An illustration of this is his treatment of St. Augustine, whom he admires and associates with the skepticism of Montaigne and Oakeshott.

Augustine was, of course, an orthodox Catholic Christian, an unlikely source of support for Sullivan’s liberal reform agenda, one who said that his faith in the Scriptures hinged on the Church’s promulgation of the Scriptures. What Sullivan takes from Augustine is his powerful skepticism about human devices and constructions, his profound sense of man’s radical, ineluctable temporality. Augustine was thus profoundly skeptical about human pretensions, and to this extent he has affinities with Montaigne and with Oakeshott, who had a great admiration for what he called Augustine’s “religious imagination.”

BUT AUGUSTINE WOULD not be satisfied with the mostly human Jesus that Sullivan presents. In the *Confessions*, Augustine says the prelude to his conversion to Christianity came through the Platonic insight into the reality of the non-corporeal. This led Augustine beyond Plato to grasp the centrality of the Incarnation, the Word made flesh—not merely as a man through whom God comes alongside us in this world as a model human being, friend, and helpmeet but also as the source of transfiguration to lift our eyes toward the heavenly kingdom, to help us to be not of this world. According to Sullivan, however, “at the core of the very Gospels on which fundamentalists rely for their passionate certainty is a definition of humanness

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that is marked by imperfection and uncertainty."

This is who Jesus is, for Sullivan, and he proposes that Christians should commemorate Jesus "whose individuality and humanity cannot be abstracted [that is, Jesus is obscured by doctrines]... who was God and lived among us... and who commanded us to ignore everything except... to love one another." Sullivan does not mention the biblical injunction that we must, lovingly, speak the truth.

Nevertheless, Sullivan offers an attractive Oakeshottian Augustine. He tells the charming story of visiting Oakeshott at his Dorset cottage and discussing Augustine with him. I can corroborate the account Sullivan gives because I had many similar conversations with Oakeshott on these subjects during which he said to me the same things Sullivan reports. It was always clear to me that Oakeshott, whom I believe was a thinker of genius, took exactly what he wanted from past thinkers. I do not mean that he failed to explicate the thought of past thinkers accurately and fully when he was engaged in such scholarly work; his work on Hobbes illustrates this. But in elaborating his personal convictions, there were parts of the thought of thinkers such as Augustine that Oakeshott quietly passed over. It is evident that the Augustine whom Sullivan admires is the part of Augustine congenial to Oakeshott. Augustine taken whole is a fundamentalist by Sullivan's definition.

We find another difficulty in Sullivan's extended critique of natural-law theorists. (Sullivan mainly takes on Robert George.) Sullivan grounds most of his argument against them on nature's astonishing diversity, from which he concludes that normative natural-law theories cannot have a nonarbitrary foundation. This is crucial to his argument because Catholic natural-law teaching contradicts his agenda regarding

abortion, gay rights, and stem-cell research. Yet natural lawyers, such as Robert George, ignore neither the scientific revolution nor modern technology in responding to the challenges these pose. Thus, while they hold to strict ethical precepts, they cannot be merely "fundamen-

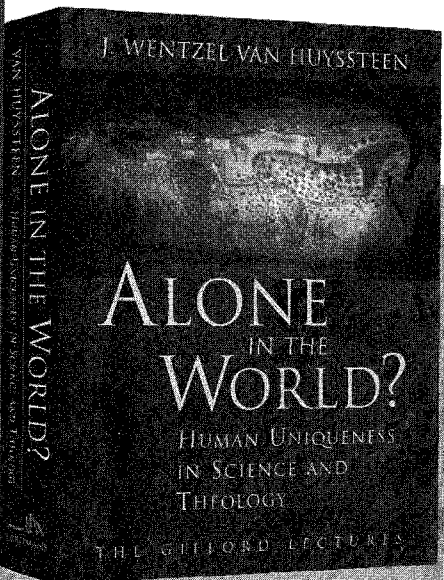
talist," for they willingly enter into dialogue with those with whom they disagree about the ethical ramifications of modern science. The task these thinkers accept is to reconcile reason and revelation, not to pit them against each other. To hold something to be true need not entail

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closing off argument or finding disagreement intolerable.

Even more important, Sullivan misconstrues central aspects of natural-law theorizing. The astonishing diversity of nature has always been recognized by natural-law thinkers. In the Christian natural-law tradi-

tion, the telos of humanity is not derived only from biological nature but also from our apprehension within nature of a supernatural end transcending biological nature. Human consciousness apprehends the possibility of something beyond nature, discovers that to be human is

to be more than mere biological nature, and thus the possibility of aspiring to a higher, transfiguring end. Sullivan thinks natural law holds that nature "dictates certain moral behavior." Properly speaking, however, it is the apprehension of a transcendent possibility available to human beings that, for Christians guided by revelation, brings forth a vision of spiritual life that we can choose, requiring discrimination among, and sacrifice of, various promptings of nature.

Biological nature constitutes a precondition of our existence but does not dictate what it means to be human. Promptings and urges are not dictations; they do not license us to do as we wish, nor do they excuse us from the ordeal of giving approval and disapproval to our desires. This confusion and the modern decline of faith in revelation, not the astonishing diversity of nature, are at issue here.

For Sullivan, revelation seems to be that which can be appropriated in human terms as a consoling means to get along in a world without a pre-ordained end. Sullivan abandons the teleological understanding of humanity, as did Oakeshott.

For Oakeshott, "revelation" was a way of expressing self-understanding. Sullivan says that "theo-conservatives" "abhor" what is "unnatural." Rather, one might say that they lament the obscuring of a transfiguring vision.

It is that very sense of loss, however, that for Sullivan justifies his skeptical conservatism. As with Oakeshott, Sullivan's religious sensibility, which is genuine, is immanent and full of the resignation reminiscent of the Stoics and the Epicureans. Sullivan concludes: "By empirical observation, homo sapiens is a moderately adulterous species, made up primarily of mildly unfaithful male-female couples with a small minority of same-sex coupling. This is our nature, imprinted indelibly on our

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genes . . . it does not exclude a diversity of moral sexual experience and identity."

Is this reductive and statistical observation exhaustive? "Imprinted indelibly"? What exactly does that mean? That there is nothing to be done but to submit to ineluctable necessity? But this avoids the question of the nature and destiny of humanity, as opposed to merely living together experimentally in endlessness unto death. Not to accept Sullivan's argument is, according to his logic, to risk fundamentalism.

As the argument progresses, it becomes clear that "fundamentalism" is a broad-ranging ideal type that includes—in varying degrees of intensity and danger from mild to extreme, he does admit—Saint Paul, the Inquisition, Oliver Cromwell, radical Islam, Fascists, Nazis, Soviet Communists, Maoists, Osama bin Laden, and Benedict XVI. "For Osama, as with the evangelical Christian right, there was a perfect Edenic past, a fallen present, and a perfect future promised." "This use of religion for extreme repression, and even terror, is not of course restricted to Islam. For most of its history, Christianity has had a worse record." No sustained argument is provided for this moral equivalency, and little is said of the good Christianity has done.

What, then, is the "good conservatism"? Sullivan's good conservatism is inspired by what he gets from Montaigne; Michael Oakeshott, whose writings altered Sullivan's life; and, somewhat surprisingly, Leo Strauss, who is nowadays criticized as the inspiration for neo-conservatism in American foreign policy. Sullivan aims to "rescue" Strauss from his followers, who have, as he sees it, corrupted the Straussian message. Sullivan goes so far as to argue that, ultimately, Strauss and Oakeshott are saying similar things. This will surprise many Oakeshottians and Straussians.

For the good conservative, "there is merely life—life as a continuing narrative, both personal and communal, a narrative that, like a conversation, has no pre-ordained end and no ultimate truth but the one we give to it . . . conservatism begins with the premise of human error, fundamen-

talism rests on the fact of divine truth." Even if some conservatives think this—plenty of conservatives who might agree with Sullivan's critique of our foreign policy would reject it—can it be so for a "good Christian"? Is it not more likely that good Christians (and at least many

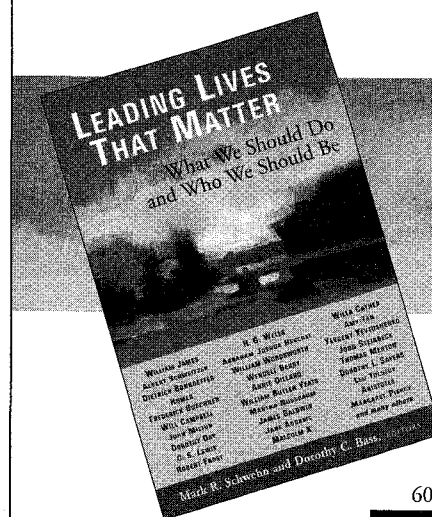
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good conservatives) acknowledge the inevitability of human error while remaining faithful to divine truth?

For Sullivan, "the defining characteristic of the [good] conservative is that he knows what he doesn't know. . . . While not denying that the truth exists, the conservative is content to say merely that his grasp on it is always provisional." Sullivan's libertarian streak leads him to be a "small government," free-market opponent of the regulatory state, while admitting that libertarians fail to appreciate the Hobbesian elements of politics. Virtue is for him a private matter, the crucial value is freedom: "Thatcher and Reagan had some socially conservative views. But these never supplied the organizing principle or ideological mandate on which they governed. They spoke of freedom far more often than of virtue." But, of course, they did speak of virtue.

Finally, conservatism as politics "is an acceptance of the unknowability of ultimate truth, an acknowledgment of the distinction between what is true forever and what is true

for the here and now . . . a way of looking at the world whose most perfect expression might be called inactivism. . . . The great and constant dream of [a conservative] is to be left alone by his own government and by his fellow humans, as much as is possible . . . [in] contingent and foundationless conservatism . . . [whose] deeper asset is its restless, spiritual core . . . [finding] the peace that comes from accepting such doubt and turning it into living."

This emphasis on freedom, privacy, and relaxed, inclusive Christianity suggests that Sullivan wants to use politics to get beyond politics, and he wants to argue religion in order to free religion from argument. This will attract some who will feel no need to look further. Given the intense spiritual longing afoot in the world, however, characterizing responses to that longing as fundamentalist is relevant but inadequate. We require more-careful analyses of tradition and natural law, a more discriminating analysis of "fundamentalism," and deeper reflection on the paradoxical character of modern spiritual uncertainty.

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The Check Is in the Mail

IN OUR HANDS: A PLAN TO
REPLACE THE WELFARE STATE
by CHARLES MURRAY
AEI Press, 140 pages, \$20.00

Reviewed by Lawrence M. Mead

IN HIS 1984 BOOK, *Losing Ground*, Charles Murray attacked the welfare system for tempting the poor into dysfunction. Since welfare supported families where the adults had children without marrying or working, it was bound to create more of such families. The conclusion Murray drew was that welfare should be abolished.

LAWRENCE M. MEAD is professor of politics at New York University. He is the coauthor, most recently, of *Welfare Reform and Political Theory*.

In 1994, however, Murray joined Richard Herrnstein to write *The Bell Curve*, arguing that social problems were most common among the less intelligent and that low IQ was largely rooted in biology, including race. The authors also concluded, however, that the least competent might not be able to support themselves, so society should guarantee them an income. In the furor about the book's racial argument, few noticed this reversal of Murray's earlier position.

Now, in *In Our Hands*, Murray extends that idea of a guaranteed income into a dramatic proposal to replace the entire welfare state. All national social programs—Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, welfare, and all other means-tested benefits—would be replaced by a single grant of \$10,000 to be given annually to all adults, from age twenty-one to

the end of their lives. The amount would be indexed to rise with inflation. The grant would guarantee support for those who are unable to succeed even if they work. The idea may sound expensive, but Murray calculates that it would cost less than the existing programs within a few years, chiefly due to the ballooning cost of Social Security and Medicare for the baby boom.

For those who worked, the benefit would be reduced by as much as \$5,000. This feature aligns the plan with the "negative income tax," first proposed by Milton Friedman and adopted by liberal welfare reformers in the 1960s and 1970s. The negative income tax gave the poor a grant and then deducted from it half of any earnings, to preserve some incentive to work. So here, remarkably, America's leading conservative has



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endorsed the very symbol of liberal entitlement.

Murray put a lot of work into the budget projections, tax incentives, and transition arrangements for his plan, and he presents his argument—as in his earlier works—in pellucid prose. Even Murray's opponents recognize that he is a superb wordsmith.

Can we take the plan seriously? As a proposal to revamp the middle-class welfare state, yes. Social Security will soon go bankrupt unless reformed. Murray would solve that problem by abolishing the program and counting on individuals to invest for their own retirement. Since some would fail to do so, he would reluctantly allow forced saving—a requirement that people invest some percentage of their income grant in private funds. Those assets would replace Social Security and should, on average, provide better income than retirees get now. The final result resembles the proposals to privatize Social Security made by the Cato Institute.

On health care, Murray argues trenchantly that the current mix of private and public coverage generates massive incentives for waste. Since consumers pay little of the cost of care when they need it, they overconsume. Instead, Murray would require that people devote \$3,000 out of their allotted \$10,000 to buy private health policies with high deductibles. This way, using care would cost consumers more and deter waste. Among other changes, he would also make health insurers set premiums based on health costs in the entire community, banning insurers' current competition to enroll only the healthy. Thus the cost of serious illnesses would be broadly shared. Some system like this seems unavoidable if Medicare is not to bankrupt the government.

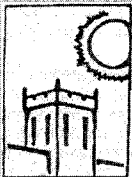
On other counts, the plan is less convincing. Murray claims that it would nearly eliminate poverty. But how would it change the behaviors that do much to create poverty and

that motivated *Losing Ground*—nonwork by employable adults, unwed pregnancy, drug addiction, school failure, and so forth? Murray's \$10,000 grant would be universal, not conditioned on whether recipients were "deserving," like the beneficiaries of Social Security or unemployment insurance, who have contributed toward their benefits.

At most he can claim that the grant's universality would eliminate some current incentives favoring bad behavior. Poor women would no longer get more money from the government if they had children out of wedlock; their grant would be the same \$10,000 in any event. And poor men would face a "Doolittle effect": Like Eliza Doolittle's ne'er-do-well father in *My Fair Lady*, they would face more social pressure to work and take responsibility for their families because they could no longer claim to be destitute.

But the idea that such changes would knit together the fraying families of the inner city is a fantasy. The evidence suggests that having children out of wedlock or failing to support them is not caused to any important extent by economic incentives. Poor parents do not do these things because it makes economic sense for them. Acting this way is already deeply contrary to their own interests. Altering the benefit structure can, at best, make it only slightly more irrational. Dysfunction is driven by noneconomic forces—the breakdown of the family and public order in low-income areas.

Rather than change incentives, what the government has chiefly done in this past generation is to restore order. It has required welfare mothers to work, toughened up on law enforcement and child-support collections, and raised standards in the schools. Rather than universalize aid, as Murray would do, it has concentrated means-tested benefits on those who are willing to work and taken them away from those who are



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not. That has changed incentives and, more important, the moral signals people get about how they are supposed to behave. Since the early 1990s, crime and unwed pregnancy have fallen, and one of the reasons probably is these changes in public expectations. Poor adults now know more clearly that if they misbehave they will be held accountable. Above all, they will have to work.

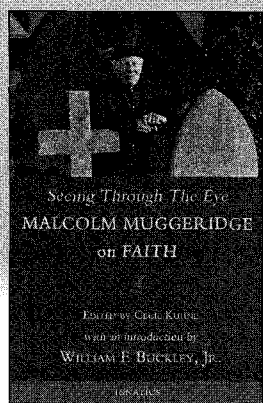
Thus, Murray is deeply exercised by the moral evils surrounding poverty, but in the end he fails to confront them. His plan leaves good behavior as a choice, not an obligation. He refuses, he says, to "stage-manage" lives. In this he resembles the liberal theorists who crafted the negative income tax, and he differs from other conservatives who lately have used government to try to enforce values. Indeed, at a symposium

on his book held at New York University in May, his plan was endorsed with minor changes by Dalton Conley, a liberal sociology professor. Murray commented that he differed less with Conley than he did with paternalistic welfare reformers.

How do we explain this incongruity? In the same symposium, Murray remarked, "I am not a conservative. I am a libertarian." In this lies the answer. Conservatives are those who seek to restrain government but also to promote individual responsibility. The two goals may be consistent when dealing with the middle class: Deny them some public benefits, and they will probably do more to provide for themselves. With the poor, however, the loss of self-command seems far greater and largely immune to economics. To deny

this group support or, as Murray does, to provide it without direction would perpetuate disarray. So most conservatives have accepted that, at least in antipoverty policy, promoting good behavior must come ahead of smaller government.

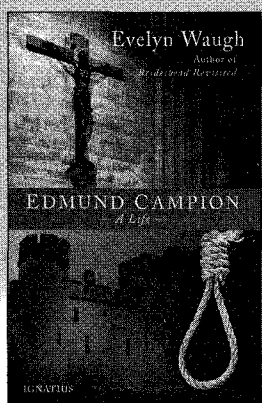
Libertarians, in contrast, seek smaller government *tout court*. Toward the end of *In Our Hands*, Murray makes clear that his priority is not really to overcome the dysfunctions behind poverty. Rather, it is to restore the small-government society of the nineteenth century. Then there were no government social programs. The poor were taken care of by churches and other voluntary bodies. Murray, like some other interpreters of that era (Gertrude Himmelfarb, Marvin Olasky, Joel Schwartz), thinks that this system did more to overcome poverty than government



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does today. He thinks that, under his plan, voluntary effort would once again arise to minister to the poor, because government agencies would no longer do so. A much more individualist and dynamic society would emerge than exists today, where political scientists find that "social capital" is withering. It is an appealing vision,

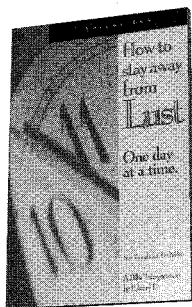
one that harks back to Murray's childhood in small-town Iowa. Unfortunately, today's long-term poor, who are mostly black and Hispanic, tend to have more-serious problems—especially family problems—than the largely white poor aided by Victorian charity. Murray, like other theorists of both the Left

and the Right, tends to make what I call the competence assumption. He presumes that the individuals he seeks to help behave rationally enough to advance their own self-interest, if not society's. If they violate the collective good, that must be because it conflicts with their personal interest. Realign individual incentives so as to serve society, rationalists say, and all will be well. The middle class and business do indeed respond to such suasions. But alas, those at the bottom of society typically do not. They live largely outside the market—just as the Left once thought the whole of society should do.

There is finally a conflict between Murray's libertarian instincts, first shown in *Losing Ground*, and his realization that the poor cannot cope without aid, first expressed in *The Bell Curve*. *In Our Hands* shows both tendencies, and the tension between them is unresolved. On the one hand, the author recognizes that the less fortunate need help. But on the other hand, he would give that help in a form that finesses their most serious problems. For if the poor responded to guaranteed income in the sensible way he supposes, few of them would be poor for very long in the first place. Libertarians have long assumed competence, but the challenge is to create it.

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THE CREATION: A MEETING OF
SCIENCE AND RELIGION

by EDWARD O. WILSON
W.W. Norton, 160 pages, \$21.95

Reviewed by Stephen M. Barr

IF THERE IS a single word that sums up the life and work of Edward O. Wilson, it is *naturalist*. The dictionary defines a naturalist to be either "an expert in natural history; a person who makes a special study of plants or animals" or "a person who believes that only natural laws and forces operate in the world; a believer in philosophical naturalism," and Wilson is the perfect embodiment of both. He has studied plants and animals for sixty-five years, making himself the world's leading authority on ants. He is also the father of sociobiology, championing an uncompromising metaphysical naturalism in many of his writings. More than a mere scientist, Wilson is a devotee of the natural—which has led him in recent years to become an eloquent defender of "Living Nature" against the encroachments of man and technological spoliation.

At one level, his new book, *The Creation*, is simply a conservationist tract, a passionate plea that we wake up to the rapid and accelerating loss of "biodiversity." Much of the book is filled with descriptions of the astonishing variety of living things (900,000 classified species, with perhaps ten times as many remaining to be discovered) and accounts of the myriad ways in which we benefit from even the humblest of these creatures. Wilson spices up his account with many fascinating examples:

[People] forget, if they ever knew, how voracious caterpillars

of an obscure moth from the American tropics saved Australia's pastureland from the overgrowth of cactus; how a Madagascar 'weed,' the rosy periwinkle, provided the alkaloids that cure most cases of Hodgkin's disease and acute childhood leukemia; how another substance from an obscure Norwegian fungus made possible the organ transplant industry; [and] how a chemical from the saliva of leeches yielded a solvent that prevents blood clots during and after surgery.

This treasury of life is in peril. Wilson says that human activity has led the earth into "the largest spasm of mass extinction since the end of the Cretaceous period, 65 million years ago" and that this may result by century's end in the loss of a substantial fraction of existing species.

Not all the news is bad; some species have been brought back from the brink of extinction. He tells the story of the Chatham Island black robin, and the breeding of "Old Blue," the last surviving female, with "Old Yellow," the last surviving male. Such bright spots are the exception, however, and the picture he paints is not one to invite complacency. Yet Wilson is not an environmental absolutist or extremist. He calls himself a humanist, and much of his argument is couched in terms of the value of living nature to man—economically, aesthetically, psychologically, and even spiritually. Nor is he an enemy of technological progress and economic growth, or a crier of inevitable doom. With a one-time investment of \$30 billion, he says, the world can come through the most critical period (the next hundred years) tolerably well as far as land creatures are concerned. (Preserving sea creatures will be more costly.)

The Creation has as its subtitle *A Meeting of Science and Religion*. Wilson has rightly been seen as an antagonist of religion, although he is not a fanatical hater of religion like

Richard Dawkins. Wilson has an appreciation of the depth and complexity of human nature that leads him to what he calls "existential conservatism." This shows, for instance, in his healthy skepticism toward the "giddily futuristic" fantasies of genetic engineering. "It is far better to work with human nature as it is . . . than it would be to tinker with something that it took eons of trial and error to create." Consequently, Wilson does not have Dawkins' puritanical impulse to extirpate deeply rooted aspects of human nature.

Nonetheless, at a philosophical level, Wilson remains a proponent of a worldview that cannot share intellectual space with religious belief. Which makes it interesting that in *The Creation*, he proposes a truce. He suggests, in spite of what he sees as a deep and irreconcilable contradiction between science and religion, that they form an alliance to save the world of living things. Such cooperation is useful because science and religion are "the two most powerful forces in the world today," and such cooperation is possible because the preservation of living nature is a "universal value."

The book is written in the form of a letter to an imaginary Southern Baptist pastor, whom he addresses as "my respected friend." Wilson notes his own Southern Baptist upbringing in Alabama and how he once "answered the altar call" and "went under the water." Nevertheless, there is a jarring inconsistency of tone throughout the book. The most unctuous professions of respect alternate with the most disdainful references to the Baptist's beliefs in end-time prophecies, the torment of the damned (that will last for "trillions and trillions of years . . . all for a mistake they made in choice of religion"), and "the sacred scripture of Iron Age desert kingdoms." Wilson speaks on one page of the "religious qualities that make us ineffably human" and on another of religion as

STEPHEN M. BARR is a theoretical particle physicist at the Bartol Research Institute of the University of Delaware and author of *Modern Physics and Ancient Faith*.

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF G. K. CHESTERTON

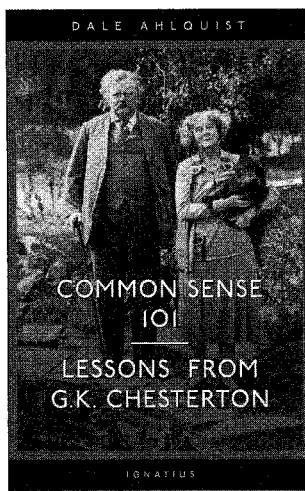
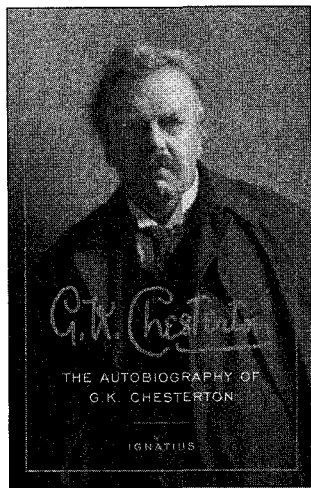
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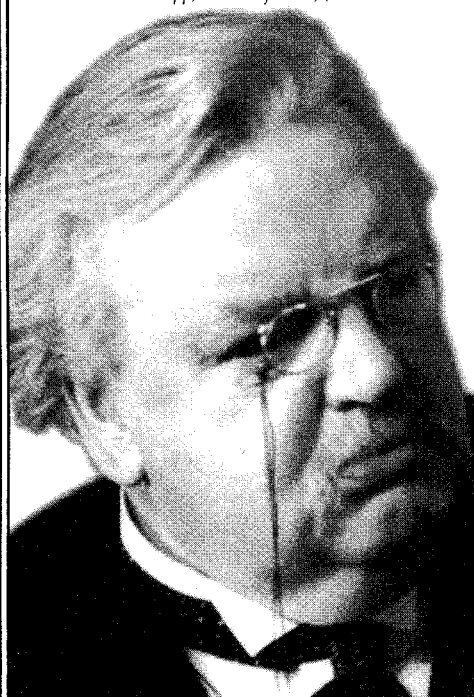
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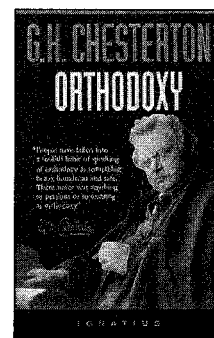
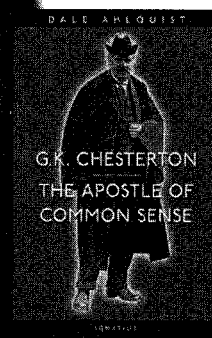
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the ignorant worship of "tribal deities." The "respect" he has for his Baptist friend seems at times to be of the kind that a naturalist might have for an orangutan. It is a respect for biodiversity; no intellectual equality is implied. The pastor has nothing to teach Wilson except as a specimen.

There is also a deep incoherence in the premise of the book. Wilson proclaims conservation a "moral precept shared by people of all beliefs" and yet avers that "the fate of ten million other [species] does not matter" for the "millions [of Americans who] think the End of Time" is imminent, a group he suspects includes his Baptist friend ("Pastor, tell me I am wrong!"). This idea of a causal link between end-time prophecy and the Religious Right's supposed indifference to the environment has been popularized by the likes of Bill Moyers, who simply proclaim it as a fact without adducing genuine evidence and despite the vigorous denials of actual evangelicals.

There is also some blame shifting in Wilson's account. Even the unpleasant by-products of scientific progress (which, Wilson claims, has been "often opposed by the followers of Holy Scripture") are somehow the fault of religion. After accurately describing how secular ideologies of progress have contributed to the neglect of the environment, Wilson, to lay equal blame on religion, implausibly conjures up the image of a hypothetical "religious scholar" who "might" argue for the unimportance of the "immense array of creatures discovered by science" on the grounds that they "are not even mentioned in Holy Scripture."

If Wilson knew more of the history of science, he would know that from Copernicus in the sixteenth century to Maxwell in the nineteenth, science was not "often opposed by followers of Holy Scripture" but was, in fact, largely built by them. Indeed, most great scientists in that period were such followers. But

for Wilson, "science and religion do not easily mix," and his model scientist is Charles Darwin, who "abandoned Christian dogma, and then with his newfound intellectual freedom" made his great advances. Far more typical among the founders of modern science, however, was Kepler, who announced his greatest discovery with the prayer, "I thank thee, Lord God our Creator, that thou allowest me to see the beauty in thy work of creation."

Despite his low opinion of religious thought, Wilson makes liberal use of religious language and imagery. He speaks of "the Creation" (meaning for him the world of living things), "the planetary ark," the "redemption" of the environment, "Lazarus projects" to rescue endangered species, human life as the "mystery of mysteries," and pristine nature as "Eden." The word *spiritual* is sprinkled throughout his book. This is not just rhetoric, I think, meant to give a patina of religiosity to his ideas to make them more attractive to his imagined Baptist friend. He is up to something else, and what takes shape in the pages of *The Creation*, though never avowed explicitly as such, is a new religion, or a new form of a very old religion. It is naturalism writ large.

HERE ARE THE TENETS of this Naturalist creed: Nature is all in all. It is an "ancient, autonomous creative force," the beneficent provider and source of life. Man is but a part of nature, and thus when we understand nature more fully we will learn "the meaning of human life" and "the origin and hence meaning of the aesthetic and religious qualities that make us ineffably human." Indeed, human beings find their proper fulfillment in nature, since "the human species . . . adapted physically and mentally to life on Earth and no place else." That is why we feel most at home and most serene in natural environments, especially those that

most resemble the African savannah in which our species evolved.

For that matter, humans have a natural "biophilia," a love for and attraction to the rest of "living Nature." The human race did fall, indeed more than once, and each fall involved a "betrayal of Nature." We attempted to "ascend *from* Nature," whereas what we really need is to "ascend *to* Nature." In restoring and preserving living nature, we will restore Eden and experience nature's "deeply fulfilling beneficence." This fulfillment will be achieved in two ways: by "primal experience" of nature and scientific understanding of nature. The science of biology is the path to both: "Biology now leads in reconstructing the human self-image. It has become the paramount science. . . . It is the key to human health and to the management of the living environment. It has become foremost in relevance to the central questions of philosophy, aiming to explain the nature of mind and reality and the meaning of life."

Thus, biological science is nature understanding itself. It is a way of life. Even laymen can partake in it through scientific education, nature excursions, field trips, "bioblitzes" (in which "citizen scientists" descend upon a locale to inventory its biodiversity), and other activities that will combine recreation, education, primal experience, scientific research, and saving the planet. By serving nature, we will also bring abundant material blessings upon ourselves in agriculture and medicine.

How did Wilson end up pitting science against biblical religion and erecting nature into a god? It begins with an ignorance of Western religious tradition. This reveals itself in little gaffes, as when he misuses the word *magisterium*, and when he innocently quotes a badly translated passage from a sixteenth-century chronicler that refers to the saints in heaven as our "lawyers" instead of "advocates." But his theological

ignorance runs deeper. He plays with the word *creation*, even choosing it as the title of his book, while evincing no grasp of what it means. In its traditional and profounder meaning, creation is that timeless act whereby God holds all things in existence. It is not an alternative to natural theories of origin or natural explanations of change.

Just as the events of a play unfold according to an internal logic and have among themselves causal relationships, and nevertheless the whole play with all its parts has its being from the mind of the playwright, so too in the universe there are natural causes, processes, and laws, and yet the whole depends for its reality upon God. Did this insect evolve or is it created by God? To ask that is as silly as to ask whether Polonius died because Hamlet stabbed him or because Shakespeare wrote the play that way. For Wilson, nature is a play that somehow wrote itself, and, since he cannot find the author among its *dramatis personae*, he concludes that he must not exist.

The blindness that afflicts scientists like Wilson was accurately diagnosed twenty-two centuries ago by the author of the Book of Wisdom, speaking of the *physikoi* of ancient Greece. "They were unable from the good things that are seen to know him who exists; nor did they recognize the craftsman while paying heed to his works. . . . Yet these men are little to be blamed, for perhaps they go astray while seeking God and desiring to find him. For, as they live among his works, they keep searching; and they trust in what they see, because the things that are seen are beautiful. Yet again, not even they are to be excused; for if they had the power to know so much that they could investigate the world, how did they fail to find sooner the Lord of these things?" In the love of nature and the preservation of nature, the Christian can join, but the Naturalism of Wilson is idolatry.

BRIEFLY NOTED

THE CONSERVATIVE POETS:
A CONTEMPORARY ANTHOLOGY
edited by WILLIAM BAER
Evansville Univ. Press, 182 pages, \$20

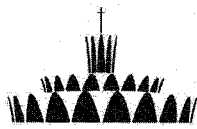
To refute Lionel Trilling's assertion that there is no significant conservative imagination at work in America, William Baer has assembled twelve contemporary conservative poets. In his introduction, Baer lists the six "foundational premises" from Russell Kirk's *The Conservative Mind* that define the poets' conservatism. Their ideology is also evident in their use of traditional poetic forms. Arranged chronologically, from Marion Montgomery (b. 1925) to Carrie Jerrell (b. 1976), the poets' conser-

vatism appears primarily in their choice of subjects and themes. Instead of the moral posturing, political utopianism, and sentimentality readers expect from contemporary verse, these poets present life in its irreducible complexity, including its tragic dimension. Anthony Lombardy's "Casinos" illustrates the latter by asserting that casinos ready us "for other forms of loss." This sense of the tragic, present throughout the book, is often accompanied by a redemptive hope, grounded by belief in a transcendent order. Bryce Christensen concludes "Vigil" by observing, "Above a mortgaged world, God's lamps still shine." By including several masterpieces of the form, the anthology refutes Robert Bly's assertion that sonnets are where old professors go to die. Readers will recognize several contributors to *FIRST THINGS* among the poets.

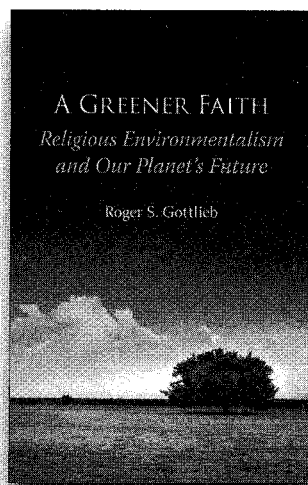


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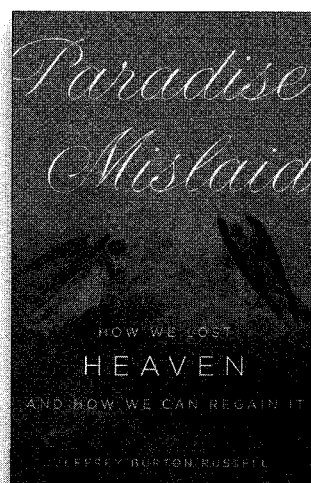
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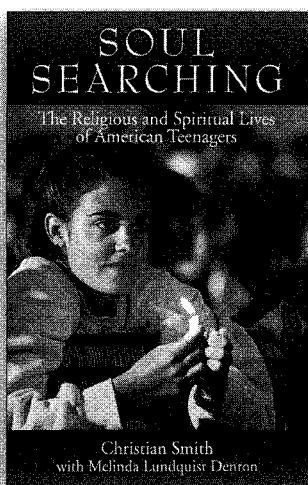
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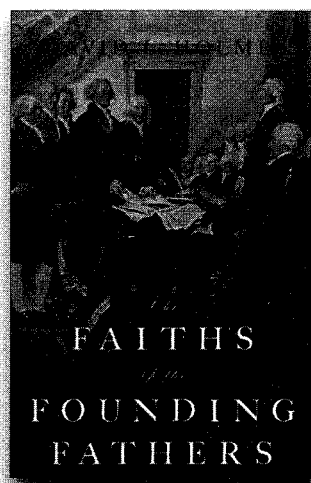
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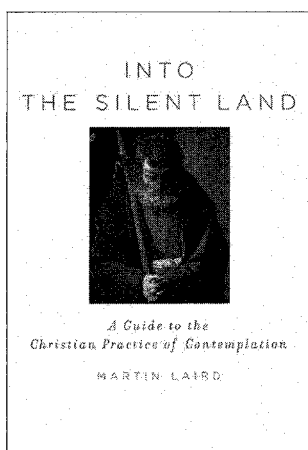
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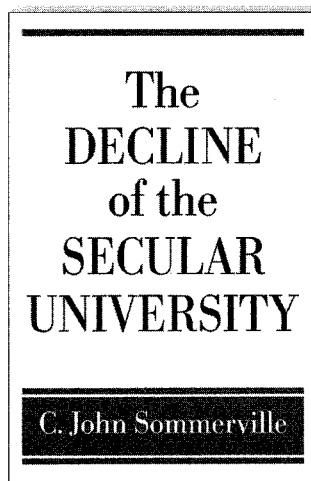
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THE PUBLIC SQUARE

A Continuing Survey of Religion, Culture, and Public Life

Richard John Neuhaus

AN IRREVOCABLE COMMITMENT

The Beeson Divinity School in Birmingham, Alabama, is a remarkable place. It very much reflects the vision of Timothy George, its founding and present dean, a Baptist of Calvinist proclivities who believes that evangelical Protestantism should be fully engaged in the quest for greater Christian unity. Beeson is mainly Baptist but makes a point of being interdenominational, evangelically speaking. George is also an invaluable participant in *Evangelicals and Catholics Together*. A while back, Beeson held a conference, in cooperation with the theological journal *Pro Ecclesia*, on the 2003 "Princeton Proposal" for the future of ecumenism (see *FIRST THINGS*, June/July 2003). At the Beeson conference, I was assigned the topic "The Quest for Full Visible Unity: The Role of the Roman Catholic Church." It was an occasion for rethinking what was meant by ecumenism in the last century and the meaning of ecumenism today.

If ecumenism is understood as the quest for full visible unity, and if full visible unity is understood as what the Catholic Church means by "full communion," then it is perhaps not quite accurate to speak of "the role" of the Catholic Church. If that is the definition of ecumenism, perhaps it is more accurate to explore the possibility that, in crucial respects, the Catholic Church is the ecumenical movement. Not exclusively, of course, but in a singular way related to her self-understanding. If the Catholic Church is what she claims to be, ecumenism is not optional but constitutive. She cannot settle for understanding herself as one church among the churches in the way that other churches and ecclesial communities can and do understand themselves.

The 2003 Princeton Proposal reflects key aspects of a Catholic understanding of ecumenism. Guided by the prayer of the Church's Lord in John 17, the signers declare that the statement of the 1961 World Council of Churches assembly at New Delhi remains "the most adequate and comprehensive description" of the unity that we must seek. New Delhi said: "[This unity] is being made visible as all in each place who are baptized into Jesus Christ and confess him as Lord and Savior are brought by the Holy Spirit into one fully committed fellowship, holding the one apostolic faith, preaching the one gospel, breaking the one bread, joining in common prayer, and having a corporate life reaching out in witness and service to all and who at the same time are united with the whole Christian fellowship in all places and all ages, in such wise that ministry and members are accepted by all, and that all can act and speak together as occasion requires for the tasks to which God calls His people."

That was forty-five years ago. The Princeton Proposal is undoubtedly correct in saying that where we are now is not where the ecumenical movement was supposed to be at the beginning of the third millennium. When the Princeton statement was first issued, I warmly welcomed it but noted its poignant tone. I wrote that it might better have been titled the Princeton Protest or the Princeton Prayer.

The Catholic commitment to the quest for full visible unity as full communion is, as has been reaffirmed again and again in the years since the Second Vatican Council, "irrevocable." The Catholic Proposal and the Princeton Proposal are similar, if not identical, in their goal. In the Catholic understanding, the Catholic Proposal has been on the table since the apostolic era. In the unhappy circumstances following the sixteenth-century divisions, that proposal was typically put in terms of

other communities' "returning" to the Catholic fold. As Johannes Cardinal Willebrands, then head of the pontifical council for Christian unity, said many years ago, the word *return* is no longer part of the Catholic ecumenical vocabulary. Certainly individuals do return, but ecumenism is about the reconciliation of ecclesial communities.

Also ecumenically, a certain turning and returning is in order. The 1995 encyclical *Ut Unum Sint* invites us to look again to the first millennium, before the tragic divisions both between East and West and within the West, to see if there are not there possibilities for realizing the unity to which we are called. The call, however, is not to the past but to the future—toward the fulfillment of Christ's prayer in John 17, which is a prayer for visible unity among all who call him Lord.

When full communion among all Christians is realized, nobody will feel a need to speak of the *Roman* Catholic Church, and there will certainly be no talk of "returning" to Rome, for then there will be, quite simply and comprehensively, the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church. The Catholic Proposal, unlike the Princeton Proposal, is not a protest against what has been lost or a wan plea for what might be restored, but is an anticipation of the promised future. It is not a program with goals and schedules; it is simply the Catholic Church as the present form of the promised reality of the one Church. That present form of the promised reality is held in trust, and lived in trust, for all Christians. Indeed, it is held in trust for all humanity, for, as the Second Vatican Council affirms, the Church understands herself as a sacrament of unity in and for the world.

Laying the Groundwork

With respect to what might be called ecumenical strategy, *Ut Unum Sint* is clear that unity with the Orthodox has, and must have, priority for the Catholic Church. Here is where the great divisions began, and here is where the healing must begin. John Paul II spoke repeatedly of the need for the Church to breathe again with both lungs, East and West. I believe it is true to say that the chief hope of John Paul upon becoming pope in 1978 was that his pontificate would see the healing of the breach between East and West. It follows that the deepest disappointment of his pontificate was the failure to reach that goal.

But in *Ut Unum Sint*, and in numerous other initiatives, he laid the groundwork for that healing to happen. It is fair to say that, between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church, the only thing lacking for full communion is full communion. In terms of doctrine, liturgy, and ministry, everything is in place. What is

lacking is the will. The will to unity in Orthodoxy may await another generation or two, or more. And, of course, it is manifest that Benedict XVI is determined to build on the groundwork laid by the council and subsequent pontificates.

As the Princeton Proposal makes painfully clear, ecumenism as the quest for full communion has, in the West, come upon very hard times. For many, this is the winter of ecumenical discontent and disillusionment, which we must not permit to become terminal discouragement. It is fair to say that the two long-standing dialogues in the West that bore highest promise and once seemed to discern on the horizon the prospect of full communion were the dialogues with the Anglican and Lutheran communions. Even in the view of the most ecumenically zealous, that prospect is no longer in sight.

The developments that now appear to be shattering the Anglican Communion are cause for deep sorrow. To be sure, there are Catholics who seem pleased to note that these developments simply vindicate John Henry Newman's grim assessment, offered more than a century and a half ago, of Anglican claims to catholicity. But that is not the disposition of Rome, which since the council has tried to put the best possible construction on Anglican claims in the hope of moving toward eventual reconciliation. That a hope is disappointed does not mean an effort was misguided.

Admittedly, there was long a dispiriting air of unreality about the otherwise admirable work of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC). This has everything to do with the well-known problem of "reception," the huge gap between official theological dialogue and the actual faith and life of the churches. One might say that, as in the case with the Orthodox, ARCIC has laid the groundwork and sowed the seed for promising developments in the future, and indeed we must pray that is the case.

At the same time, we cannot ignore the fact that Anglicanism, unlike Orthodoxy, has embraced changes and will likely embrace more changes that pose new obstacles to unity. Walter Cardinal Kasper, head of the pontifical council for unity, has spoken very candidly about the fateful ecumenical consequences of the decision by the Church of England to ordain women as bishops. And there is the matter of Christian moral teaching, notably sexual morality. Early in his pontificate, John Paul was criticized for placing ethics and morality on the ecumenical agenda. Questions of faith and order, however, while they can be distinguished from questions of faith and life, cannot be separated from faith and life, meaning the faith lived faithfully.

There are striking similarities between Anglican and Lutheran developments, and they provide naught for our comfort. With Lutherans, too, full communion, at

least in the view of some, could for a time be discerned on the distant horizon. Perhaps some still believe they see it, but I fear it is a delusion. For instance, the seven years since the signing of the Joint Declaration on Justification, understandably hailed as a momentous ecumenical breakthrough, have been gravely disappointing. Carl Braaten points out that, among many Lutherans, the Joint Declaration has been met by a great yawn. It is asked, "Who today cares about those musty doctrinal disputes of the sixteenth century over questions such as justification?" Lutherans historically declared justification to be the article by which the Church stands or falls. If only Rome would allow the preaching of this great truth, Lutherans said, ecclesial reconciliation would be possible. But now many Lutheran theologians reject the Joint Declaration, while others are discovering new "fundamental" differences that stand in the way of such reconciliation. It would seem that, in the view of many, what is distinctively Lutheran cannot be maintained except in separation from the Catholic Church.

Quite apart from disputes within the theological guild, the institutions of Lutheranism, both in this country and elsewhere, both in their "liberal" (ELCA) and "conservative" (LCMS) embodiments, appear to have resigned themselves to being permanently separated Protestant denominations. Within these denominations are the valiantly defiant enclaves of "evangelical catholics," but few, if any, of them believe that Lutheranism as actually lived and institutionally embodied is open to Carl Braaten's call of almost forty years ago—in the theological journal *Una Sancta*, which I then edited—for Lutherans to bring to an end the "long exile" from the Catholic Church. It is, however, more than conceivable that, at some point in the future, the company of "evangelical catholics" now within Lutheranism will enter into a dialogue directed toward full communion. And, of course, the same could happen with sectors of Anglicanism after the reconfiguration of the Anglican Communion.

Worlds Within Worlds

I have mentioned Anglicans and Lutherans, but that of course does not address the great majority of Christians who are not in full communion with the Catholic Church. There are the communities of mainline-old-line-sideline Protestantism that, we do well to remember, include about a third of the Christians in this country. While there are theologically and evangelistically vibrant congregations here and there, the leadership of these declining bodies seems to be irrevocably set upon replicating a *Kulturprotestantismus* for a spiritually moribund liberal culture. In those bodies, once describ-

ing themselves as the ecumenical churches, it seems that nobody of influence is pressing for or is even seriously thinking about the visible unity in full communion under discussion here.

Then there are the worlds within worlds of what is generally called evangelical Protestantism. I am, I trust it is needless to say, wholeheartedly committed to the project of Evangelicals and Catholics Together (ECT). We are, as we said in our first statement in 1994, "brothers and sisters in Christ." What the Catholic Church calls our "certain but imperfect" communion with evangelicals and with all Christians will, please God, one day be perfected in full communion. ECT will in one form or another have, I hope, a long future, far beyond the lives of its founders and present participants. There is so much work to be done in correcting misunderstandings, in discovering and exploring commonalities, in tempering or removing hostilities, in contending for cultural renewal, and, above all, in proclaiming the saving gospel of Jesus Christ with one another rather than against one another.

But I assume nobody on either side of the ECT project expects that proposals for ecclesial reconciliation, and therefore for full communion, will be on the agenda in the foreseeable future. That, we may hope, will be the work of another generation, or the one after that. Yet even that hope is tempered by an awareness of the institutionally successful but theologically problematic dynamics of entrepreneurial evangelicalism that, through the church-growth movement and related strategies, perpetuate and increase ecclesial fragmentation.

And what are we to think about the explosive growth of Christianity in the Southern Hemisphere, notably in Africa, Latin America, and Asia? When—and I think it is a question of when—China really opens up, we may indeed witness what John Paul II anticipated when he spoke of the third millennium as "the springtime of evangelization." But the majority Christianity of the South—and it is already the majority of Christians—poses new ecumenical questions. There are a little over two billion Christians in the world, of whom about 1.2 billion are Catholic. Catholicism and evangelicalism/Pentecostalism are the two rapidly growing movements in the Southern Hemisphere. But the terms *evangelical* and *Pentecostal*, as we understand those terms, do not begin to capture the wild diversity of this growth. There are tens of thousands of movements and communities, each of them counting thousands and, in some cases, millions of adherents.

Many of these movements may strike us as bizarre, syncretistic, and dubiously Christian. Thirty years ago, I traveled much of Africa studying new religious movements and was honored to meet the leader of one size-

able movement who was, he assured me, John the Baptist reincarnate. The founder of another movement was the Virgin Mary's younger sister and the true mother of Jesus. (I forget the details of the putative history and theology behind these somewhat improbable claims.) Some of these movements spring from American or colonial European initiatives, while others are entirely indigenous, borrowing this or that from the Christian tradition. Many, as is to be expected among the very poor but not only among the poor, are movements focused on health and wealth, with miracles, signs, and wonders at the center of a fervent piety.

Catholics and even more traditional evangelicals and Pentecostals are given to referring to these movements in the global South as sects or cults. I think we should be cautious in using such terms. Twenty or fifty years from now, we will likely be in official dialogue with some of them, recognizing them as ecclesial communities, and it will not be helpful if they remember, as they surely will remember, that we once derided and dismissed them as cults and sects. Nor should we belittle the possibility that theological dialogue with these movements might one day be the more fruitful because their self-understanding is not, at least in most instances, defined by the longstanding Protestant-Catholic antitheses of the Northern Hemisphere.

Such, much too briefly and too generally, is the state of the quest for full communion with the Orthodox, with the Anglicans, with the Lutherans, with the mainline-oldline-sideline, with evangelical and Pentecostal Protestantism, and with the burgeoning Christianity of the South. The Catholic Church's irrevocable commitment to Christian unity requires that we establish and maintain conversations with all parties in the maddeningly diverse worlds of all who call Jesus Lord, which, according to St. Paul, does not happen except by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:3).

Communio in Truth

Christ and the Church are coterminous; the body cannot be severed from the head. Where Christ is, there, in some spiritually significant sense, the Church is also. When the Second Vatican Council teaches that the Church of Jesus Christ uniquely "subsists" in the Catholic Church, it is to say that the Catholic Church is the Church of Jesus Christ most fully and rightly ordered through time. This is the understanding advanced by the declaration *Dominus Iesus*, issued by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith six years ago under the leadership of Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, now Pope Benedict. In the teaching of the council's constitution on the Church (*Lumen Gentium*), the saving and sanctifying graces to be found in abundance

outside the boundaries of the Catholic Church gravitate toward unity with the Catholic Church.

This is not said in pride of possession—although it must be confessed that Catholics sometimes do speak in that mode. The Catholic Church is not our achievement. We have no grounds for boasting. What the Catholic Church believes she uniquely *is* is received and guarded as a gift for all Christians. As that reality is received by others, the Catholic Church will no doubt be greatly enriched and changed by the gifts that others have received and guarded during their time of exile. It must also be confessed that some Catholics bridle at the suggestion that the Catholic Church should in any way be changed. But the life of the Catholic Church, too, reflects in many ways the unhappy fact of Christian disunity. Catholics, too, must be aware of a sense of exile from the fullness of the Christian community.

The hoped-for consequence of the Catholic Church's irrevocable devotion to full communion among all Christians will bring with it changes that we cannot now anticipate, as is also made clear in *Ut Unum Sint*. At the same time, it is underscored that there can be no compromise on those things that are constitutive of the Catholic Church being the Church of Jesus Christ most fully and rightly ordered through time. There is no point in full communion in anything less than *communio* in the fullness of the truth that the Church has been given to teach and guard. Anything less would result in the grave impoverishment of us all. At the same time, we must continue to explore together what is and is not required for *communio* in truth.

In this winter of ecumenical discontent and disillusionment, we await the stirring of the Holy Spirit, praying with John Paul II that the third millennium will be "the springtime of Christian unity." As the second millennium was the millennium of divisions, he wrote, so must the third millennium be the millennium of unity. We do not know, we cannot know, the future. "Behold, I am doing a new thing," the Lord says to the prophet Isaiah. What that new thing may mean for the fulfillment of Our Lord's high priestly prayer is now hidden from our view. It may be some new challenge to our civilization, such as that posed by Islam, that will serve as a catalyst for a new Christian solidarity with implications for ecclesial unity. We do not know, we cannot know. We wait together, we study together, we pray together, and we must never tire of talking together.

While the movement of the Spirit and the gyrations of world-historical change are unknown to us, we here and now know the work that is ours. Toward the end of *Ut Unum Sint*, John Paul cites some of the questions that must be addressed in conversation with the communities issuing from the tragic divisions of the sixteenth century:

(1) The relationship between Sacred Scripture, as the highest authority in matters of faith, and Sacred Tradition, as indispensable to the interpretation of the Word of God;

(2) The Eucharist as the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ, an offering of praise to the Father, the sacrificial memorial and Real Presence of Christ and the sanctifying outpouring of the Holy Spirit;

(3) Ordination, as a Sacrament, to the threefold ministry of the episcopate, presbyterate, and diaconate;

(4) The Magisterium of the Church, entrusted to the pope and the bishops in communion with him, understood as a responsibility and an authority exercised in the name of Christ for teaching and safeguarding the faith;

(5) The Virgin Mary, as Mother of God and Icon of the Church, the spiritual Mother who intercedes for Christ's disciples and for all humanity.

The exploration of these great truths, John Paul described as a "courageous journey toward unity." We could no doubt add to this list of five ecumenical challenges. We have more than enough work to do as we wait upon the Spirit. We have not the right and, finally, we have not the reason to despair. There is cause aplenty for discouragement, but there is no excuse for permitting that discouragement to become terminal. Jesus asks, "When the Son of Man returns, will he find faith on earth?" Implicit in that question is another: Will he find people of faith who never halted, who never wavered, in laboring for the fulfillment of his prayer that "they may all be one"?

Over the years, Cardinal Ratzinger frequently spoke of ecumenism in terms of awaiting a movement of the Holy Spirit that we can neither foresee nor control. In 1986 he responded to an invitation from the editor of the *Tübinger Theologische Quartalschrift* to set forth his understanding of ecumenism. He concluded his reflection with this:

I can imagine that many will not be pleased with the concept sketched here. But whatever one can say about it, there is one objection to it which ought not to be raised: that this is a concept of stagnation and resignation or even a renunciation of ecumenism. It is quite simply the attempt to leave to God what is his business alone and to discover what then in all seriousness are our tasks. Among these tasks of ours belong doing and enduring, activity and patience. Anyone who deletes one of these pairs distorts the whole. If we tackle everything we have to do, then ecumenism will continue to be something very much alive and demanding, even more so than it has been. I am convinced that, freed from the pressure to do it ourselves and the overt and covert deadlines set

by such pressures, we shall approach one another more attentively and profoundly than if we start to transform theology into mere diplomacy and faith into mere commitment.

It is in that spirit of doing and enduring, of activity and patience, that I return to my assigned topic and suggest that "the role of the Catholic Church in the quest for visible unity" is in faithfully being the Catholic Church, which includes an irrevocable devotion to full communion among all Christians.

FT

HOMOSEXUAL BUT NO LONGER GAY

There continues to be a lively, and sometimes ugly, controversy over ministries to gays such as Exodus International. Gay activists subscribe to the motto "once gay, always gay"—frequently suggesting that also those who were never gay are living in denial. Now along comes a book that throws considerable light on the subject: Tanya Erzen's *Straight to Jesus: Sexual and Christian Conversions in the Ex-Gay Movement*, published by the University of California Press.

Erzen is a social scientist at Ohio State University, and she reports on her year spent with participants in a California ministry called New Hope. Her study convinced her that change is an extraordinarily complex process in the ex-gay movement.

Change is a conversion process that incorporates religious and sexual identity, desire, and behavior. Sexual identity is malleable and changeable because it is completely entwined with religious conversion. A person becomes ex-gay as he accepts Jesus into his life and commits to him. Much has been written about the widely publicized sexual scandals of prominent ex-gays, but in the ex-gay movement it is far more scandalous to abandon Jesus than to yield to same-sex desire.

It is commonly accepted that a person will continue to experience desire and even occasionally lapse into same-sex behavior as part of the overall conversion process. Recovery and relapse are built into the creation of an ex-gay identity, and sexual falls are expected. Rather than becoming heterosexual, men and women become part of a new identity group in which it is almost the norm to succumb to temptation and return to ex-gay ministry over and over again. As long as the offender publicly repents and reaffirms her commitment to Jesus, all is forgiven.

Organizations such as the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force and the Human Rights Campaign are adamantly opposed to ministries such as New Hope. They are heavily invested in the claim that sexual identity is fixed, unchangeable, and perhaps biological. Gay activists and writers promote the view that sexual orientation is innate, that people are born that way. Erzen writes that “studies such as those of Simon LeVay and Dean Hamer, which argue that a gay brain or gay genes exist, are revered as the basis for a minority identity and entrance into U.S. civil rights discourse.” The argument for gay rights and anti-discrimination laws depends heavily on asserting the analogy with the civil rights movement, in which skin color is not a choice but an unchangeable given.

Of course, there are many men and women who once identified themselves as gay and were part of the gay subculture and who then made a successful transition to another way of being in the world, including marriage and children. Gay activists vehemently try to deny or belittle such success stories. Psychiatrists and others connected with the National Association for Research and Therapy of Homosexuality (NARTH), however, say that the psychotherapeutic success rate with homosexuals is about the same as with other patients struggling to overcome a deep-seated problem, namely, about one-third. But these are not the people who interest Tanya Erzen in *Straight to Jesus*.

The queer thing—by which she means the odd thing—about the people at New Hope is that their identity is not that of gays who have become heterosexual but that of gays who are now ex-gays. “Ex-gay movement members, like other conservative Christians, view themselves as part of a positive transformation of American culture and religious life, often describing themselves as embattled or besieged by secular culture or the gay rights movement. They present a cultural critique of conservative Christianity, which often ignores homosexuality, of a secular culture that denies the right to attempt sexual conversion, and of the possibilities for living as gay men and women.” Ex-gays may still be homosexual, meaning that they experience same-sex desires, but they are no longer gay, meaning that they no longer equate their identity with their desires.

Make no mistake. Tanya Erzen is no sympathizer with what she describes as the Religious Right, although gay activists sometimes suggest that her sympathy for people in the ex-gay movement means she is just another conservative “homophobe.” What she does in *Straight to Jesus* is to add necessary dimensions to our understanding of those struggling with homosexual desire in the context of Christian discipleship. *Straight to Jesus* is a book deserving of serious attention.

ISRAEL IN THE SERVICE OF JUDAISM

At a recent conference sponsored by the American Jewish Committee (AJC), the Israeli novelist A.B. Yehoshua ruffled feathers, to put it gently. He declared that “only Israel, and not Judaism, could ensure the survival of the Jewish people.” Unless Jews lived in Israel and “took part in the daily decisions” of life in a Jewish state, “they did not have a Jewish identity of any significance.”

As might be imagined, this did not go over well with an audience of AJC members from all over the United States. They do not live in Israel but are sure that they are Jews. Hillel Halkin, who does live in Israel and who writes regularly for *Commentary* and the *New York Sun*, comments: “If expressing his opinions about American Jews meant hurting their feelings, [Yehoshua] should have picked another time and place for it.”

Before getting to his disagreement with Yehoshua, Halkin says this: “Indeed, despite the great inroads made by assimilation—in some ways, as a reaction to them—the hard nucleus of the American Jewish community, which numbers somewhere between one and two million people, is, Jewishly speaking, better organized, better educated, more committed, and more culturally and religiously creative than it has ever been before. And, the more committed they are, the more American Jews tend to care about Israel, too, and to give it their political and financial backing. This is hardly of ‘no significance.’ These Jews deserve an Israeli’s respect and gratitude, not his disdain.”

Mr. Halkin later got his turn on the AJC platform. He was asked whether, in view of all the threats to Israel, it was not a good thing that the Jews of the world also live in the diaspora. He responded, “You know, if, God forbid, Israel should someday be destroyed or go under, I couldn’t care less about the Jews of the Diaspora or what has happened to them.” In his column, Halkin elaborated on that impromptu response:

It’s not that Jewish life in the Diaspora has no significance, it’s that Jewish life in Israel has more. Israel represents such an enormous Jewish adventure—the only adventure in which the Jewish encounter with modernity is complete and all-embracing—that it’s hard for me to understand how any Jew who really cares about being Jewish would want to be anywhere else. Why would anyone want to sit out such an adventure on the sidelines? . . . It’s possible to strike out in history no less than in a ballgame. The loss of the First Temple was the Jewish people’s first strike. The loss of the Second Temple was its second. One more and—as

far as I'm concerned—it's out. If the Jewish people cannot maintain the state of Israel, it does not deserve to survive even one more day. If that, bad manners aside, is what A.B. Yehoshua really had in mind, I agree with him this time, too.

That strikes me as a remarkable statement. Those who know Israel much better than I do say that it reflects a viewpoint very widespread among Israelis. It is for Jews to offer a Jewish response to that position, but it is for Christians to try to understand it. The idea that only Israel, and not Judaism, can ensure the survival of the Jewish people is arresting. Reliance upon, and obedience to, the God of Israel apparently does not enter the picture.

And what is the significance of the Temple if it is not the Temple of the Lord? Is it, in fact, being suggested that, in the absence of the Lord, the state of Israel is the Third Temple? Is it the case that the state of Israel simply *is* Judaism? There are Jewish thinkers, such as Rabbi David Novak, who caution Jews against turning the state of Israel into a false god. There are Christian Zionists who assign to the state of Israel a central role in God's plan of salvation, quite apart from whether Jews share that discernment. Then there are the deep probings of St. Paul in Romans 9 through 11, exploring the purposes of the one God in the one covenant binding two peoples in a common destiny.

It is possible that the destruction, God forbid, of the state of Israel would be seen by many Jews as the end of the People of Israel. For both Jews and Christians, that is a compelling reason to be committed to the survival and safety of the state of Israel. In this commitment, however, it is understood that the state of Israel is in the service of Jews and Judaism, not—as Yehoshua and Halkin would seem to believe—the other way around.

FT

AN ANSWER TO THEOLOGICAL IMPOVERISHMENT

There is much to agree with in Luke Timothy Johnson's essay "After the Big Chill: Intellectual Freedom and Catholic Theologians," published in *Commonweal*. He writes, *inter alia*, "When the pope is understood not only as final arbiter to the deposit of faith but also its only source of theological reinterpretation, there is surely at least an impoverishment of the Church's theological life." Agreed. That can be a problem.

But then there is in his and similar articles so much tendentiousness that makes honest conversation about the problem exceedingly difficult. Begin with the title suggesting that John Paul's "repressive instincts" created a big chill in Catholic theology. One might more plausibly argue that John Paul's many pedagogical initiatives are an invitation to high theological adventure and exploration.

In the Church that Prof. Johnson prefers, he writes, "No longer would a respected and respectful editor of a Jesuit journal be removed for the sin of advocating fairness; no more would a leading theological ethicist be removed from a tenured position or a systematic theologian be quelled by the same threat." This is not worthy of Prof. Johnson, who is himself a respected New Testament scholar.

Fr. Thomas Reese was removed as editor of *America* by his Jesuit superiors—*perhaps* at the prompting of Cardinal Ratzinger—because under his editorship it was no longer clear that the magazine was on the Church's side of many controverted issues. And assuming Prof. Johnson is referring to Fr. Charles Curran and Fr. Roger Haight, the former orchestrated the effort in the Catholic academy to reject unambiguously the Church's teaching on human sexuality as set forth in the encyclical *Humanae Vitae*, and the latter refused to clarify his published ambiguities about whether, among other things, Jesus is truly God. Fr. Curran is now teaching at a Methodist university and Fr. Haight at a liberal Protestant seminary, where they can both teach whatever they want and there is still a certain panache attached to Catholics who daringly defy church authority.

What is gained by Johnson's employing a sneer phrase such as "the sin of advocating fairness"? Fr. Reese and his superiors disagreed on what constitutes journalistic fairness, and Fr. Reese lost. One can disagree with those who made that decision without suggesting, as Johnson does, that they are opposed to fairness. Perhaps there is still an adolescent *frisson* provided by the image of the Roman inquisitor saying, "Fr. Reese, you stand accused of advocating fairness."

In a similar vein, Johnson writes: "Defenders of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith argue that its investigations and sanctions of theologians are about 'truth in advertising'—Catholic theologians in Catholic colleges should teach the way the Vatican says they should teach. Such a claim does little more than reduce theological truth to catechesis."

To be sure, theology is more than catechesis. Given the state of doctrinal illiteracy among Catholics today, however, catechesis is nothing to sniff at. References to "truth in advertising" are usually in the claim that courses on Catholic theology should teach

Catholic theology—what the Magisterium of the Church teaches—not what alienated academics think the Church should teach. As in any discipline, there is a “knowledge” to be transmitted. Certainly the great tradition of Catholic dogma, doctrine, and theological reflection is immeasurably more interesting than theories borrowed from current fashions in religious thought. Minimally, students should know the tradition before they are encouraged to question it. And yes, Catholic colleges claim that their aim is to educate students who will intelligently embrace and live the faith. That is why they are called Catholic colleges. Why is this aim dismissively described as reducing theological truth to catechesis?

“Theology’s role,” writes Johnson, “is not simply to transmit the faith, but also to interrogate the faith in the name of and on behalf of the truth.” Agreed. “The greatest theologians in the Church, from Origen through Aquinas to Rahner, have tried to strike this delicate and dangerous balance.” Agreed again. One might also mention Hans Urs von Balthasar as a recent example of one who interrogated the faith in order to deepen and enrich it.

But “interrogating” the faith can take different forms. One may interrogate the faith in the sense of asking questions, on the assumption that the faith provides answers. Or one may interrogate the faith in the sense of throwing the faith into question, on the assumption that it must conform to our answers. Worthies such as Aquinas and Balthasar did the former, in the hope of eliciting answers from what the Church calls the deposit of faith and also helping the Church to articulate those answers more precisely and persuasively.

Teaching Theology

But what does this have to do with teaching theology in Catholic colleges today? How many theologians comparable to Origen, Aquinas, Rahner, or Balthasar are members of the Catholic Theological Society of America, the trade guild of academic theologians? And can one imagine Aquinas or Balthasar inviting college sophomores to interrogate—which in this context clearly means to challenge and question—doctrines that they only heard of yesterday?

Johnson writes: “For a vast number of Catholics, especially younger Catholics, it is axiomatic that the pope is not only chief pastor but also sole theologian. On every matter, the pope is not only the last word (arguably a legitimate and necessary role) but also the first word (arguably a dreadful displacement of ecclesial functions).” There is something to that, but maybe people trust the pope, in a way that they do not trust most academic theologians, to tell them the truth about the

Catholic faith. That is not “axiomatic.” It is simply a conclusion based on unhappy experiences with college teachers of theology.

The problem of a papal-centric Church that Johnson deplores is reinforced by the fact that many academic theologians have devoted their lives—and confused and demoralized innumerable young people along the way—to sustained guerilla warfare against the Church’s Magisterium. Johnson speaks of how the experience of women, homosexuals, and others can “become an effective interpreter of God’s self-disclosure in the world.” This raises the conventional litany of dissent, including items such as the ordination of women and the moral acceptance of homosexual acts.

On these and related questions, many theologians, including Luke Timothy Johnson, endlessly press for change, even though the Magisterium has unambiguously held that they are settled. That they are settled does not mean that they cannot be discussed, as is often asserted. A teaching must be discussed in order to be taught, but the discussion—including the discussion of questions lodged against the teaching—is in the service of the truth taught. While the Magisterium is not the only theological word, it is, as even Prof. Johnson allows is at least arguably true, the last theological word.

Yes, theologians should interrogate the faith. But in Prof. Johnson’s own writings, the difference between interrogating the faith and rejecting, even mocking the faith is far from evident. For instance, he wrote in *Commonweal* (June 20, 2003) on the Church’s solemn pronouncement that she is not authorized to ordain women to the priesthood:

The Roman church’s willingness to lose an ordained priesthood altogether rather than ordain married men or (horrors) women may be noble to some, but to more and more American Catholics, it appears as suicidal self-delusion. Its eagerness to ordain old men or widowers and married men into the diaconate appear as desperate avoidance mechanisms and an expression of fear and loathing toward normal sexual beings and above all toward women’s bodies. It is now no longer even possible for theologians to speak in favor of women’s ordination despite the fact that every argument advanced for an all-male clergy is laughable (at best) and blasphemous (at worst).

He treats in a similarly dismissive manner the Church’s teaching on contraception, the morally disordered nature of homosexual acts, and other matters of great moment. The question that Prof. Johnson might well ask himself is this: Why should the Church’s leadership, or Catholics more generally, heed a putatively Catholic theologian who declares that the Church’s

official teaching is laughable or blasphemous and unworthy of serious consideration?

Johnson writes, "The theological impoverishment of the Church today is real and, if something is not changed, it will undoubtedly get worse." I could not agree more. But the analysis of the problem offered by Johnson and many others is entirely papal-centric. The fault lies, they say, with the exercise of papal authority. What is lacking in these complaints is an element of self-examination, of honestly coming to terms with what has gone so radically wrong with the academic theological guild, especially in this country and Western Europe.

Complaints such as Prof. Johnson's would be taken more seriously if they engaged carefully nuanced reflections on the problem, such as the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith's 1990 document, "The Ecclesial Vocation of the Theologian," or Avery Cardinal Dulles' 2003 essay, published in these pages, "True and False Reform." As it is, theologians go on endlessly about the repression of academic freedom and of their ever-so-creative ideas while ignoring the Magisterium's invitation to face up to the full importance and dignity of their task. That task is, first of all, to communicate the faith faithfully and effectively, and also to interrogate the faith in order to deepen, enrich, and more persuasively propose that faith to the world.

It simply will not do to continue to blame our theological impoverishment on the pope. The answer to theological poverty is to provide theological riches. Incessant whining, dissent, and agitation against papal authority is a distraction from that theological task.

FT

BONHOEFFER TODAY

The Nazis did not invent, but they ruthlessly acted upon, the notion of *lebensunwertes Leben*, life that is not worthy of life. "Quality of life" rhetoric is today employed by the proponents of euthanasia and assisted suicide. Pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer clearly saw that "The distinction between life that is worth living and life that is not worth living must sooner or later destroy life itself." On April 9, 1945, Pastor Bonhoeffer was executed for his opposition to a regime that was blind to that truth. In the following passage from the *Ethics*, he is discussing just war and capital punishment, and he asserts, "All deliberate killing of innocent life is arbitrary." The discussion continues:

This last principle has not remained uncontradicted. The problem which arises here is the problem of euthanasia. The question of principle is this: Is it permissible to destroy painlessly an innocent life

which is no longer worthy of living? Two kinds of motive lie behind this question, consideration for the sick and consideration for the healthy. But before any particular aspects of the problem can be examined, it is necessary to state, as a matter of principle, that the decision about the right to destroy human life can never be based upon the concurrence of a number of different contributory factors. Either an argument is cogent enough in itself to bring about this decision, or else it is not cogent at all, and if this is the case, no number of good additional reasons can ever justify such a decision. The destruction of the life of another may be undertaken only on the basis of an unconditional necessity; when this necessity is present, then the killing must be performed, no matter how numerous or how good the reasons which weigh against it. But the taking of the life of another must never be merely one possibility among other possibilities, even though it may be an extremely well-founded possibility. If there is even the slightest responsible possibility of allowing others to remain alive, then the destruction of their lives would be arbitrary killing, murder. Killing and keeping alive are never of equal value in the making of this decision; the sparing of life has an incomparably higher claim than killing can have. Life may invoke all possible reasons in its cause; but only one single reason can be a valid reason for killing. To fail to bear this in mind is to undo the work of the Creator and Preserver of life Himself. It follows from this that to support the rightfulness of euthanasia with a number of essentially different arguments is to put oneself in the wrong from the outset by admitting indirectly that no single absolutely cogent argument exists.

WHILE WE'RE AT IT

■ From its beginnings in 1992, Evangelicals and Catholics Together (ECT) has been very deliberately an unofficial project composed of a continuing working group of participants who speak from and to their several ecclesial communities. There is an acknowledged difference between Catholic and evangelical participation, in that Catholic participants are bound by and determined to be faithful to the central teaching authority, or Magisterium, of the Catholic Church. In the communities that comprise contemporary evangelicalism, doctrinal and theological leadership is exercised by individuals and institutions that have earned the confidence of Christians within their various spheres of influence. We are pleased to note that the following evangelical leaders are among those who have

endorsed the most recent statement, "That They May Have Life" (see page 18):

Alan K. Andrews, CEO, The Navigators
 Mrs. Jill Briscoe, author and speaker
 Dr. Bryan Chapell, president, Covenant Theological Seminary
 Dr. David S. Dockery, president, Union University
 Dr. Os Guinness, senior fellow, The Trinity Forum
 Dr. David P. Gushee, Graves Professor of Moral Philosophy, Union University
 Ted A. Haggard, president, National Association of Evangelicals
 Bill Hybels, pastor, Willow Creek Community Church
 Dr. Duane Litfin, president, Wheaton College
 Dr. Richard Mouw, president, Fuller Theological Seminary
 David Neff, editor and vice president, *Christianity Today*
 Tony Perkins, president, Family Research Council
 Dr. Cornelius Plantinga, president, Calvin Theological Seminary
 Dr. Ron Sider, president and founder, Evangelicals for Social Action
 Joni Eareckson Tada, founder, Joni and Friends International Disability Center
 Rick Warren, pastor, Saddleback Church
 Dr. James White, president, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary

■ There are numerous send-ups of how contemporary politicians or scribblers might render the Gettysburg Address. "About eighty-seven years ago, a group of public-spirited leaders decided . . ." etc., etc. One might call this the Cliffs Noting of historical greatness. The other day, I ordered from Netflix a DVD of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*. The slipcover tells the story: "Fearful that Caesar will become Emperor of Rome, fellow senators Cassius and Brutus conspire against him. Caesar ignores warnings to lie low, heads to the Senate and is brutally stabbed. Caesar's right-hand man, Mark Antony, rallies the public against the conspirators, who flee Rome—with Antony's army hot on their heels." Evelyn Waugh would love it. "Right you are, up to a point, Lord Copper."

■ Following the attacks of September 11, 2001, a number of writers, the late Susan Sontag among them, opined that, however wrong their action, we must recognize a certain courage and perverse heroism in the

action of those who flew those planes into the Twin Towers. Such comments prompted outraged protest, in part because they were sometimes joined to the implication that America got what it deserved. Writing in the *New York Review of Books*, Freeman J. Dyson returns to the question. "They were soldiers enlisted in a secret brotherhood that gave meaning and purpose to their lives, working together in a brilliantly executed operation against the strongest power in the world." Dyson has been reading newly published diaries of the Japanese kamikaze pilots at the end of World War II and suggests that the September 11 terrorists "were motivated like the kamikaze pilots, more by loyalty to their comrades than by hatred of the enemy. Once the operation had been conceived and ordered, it would have been unthinkable and shameful not to carry it out. . . . Even after recognizing the great differences between the circumstances of 1945 and 2001, I believe that the kamikaze diaries give us our best insight into the state of mind of the young men who caused us such grievous harm in 2001. If we wish to understand the phenomenon of terrorism in the modern world, and if we wish to take effective measures to lessen its attraction to idealistic young people, the first and most necessary step is to understand our enemies. We must give respect to our enemies, as courageous and capable soldiers enlisted in an evil cause, before we can understand them. The kamikaze diaries give us a basis on which to build both respect and understanding." Mr. Dyson is on morally treacherous ground, verging on the nihilistic French adage that to understand all is to forgive all. Elements of human dignity and sympathy are not entirely obliterated by the abominations of which human beings are capable. Dante's damned are nonetheless human beings created in the image of God. It may be that the most perverse of sexual practices are not untouched by a glittering scintilla of the desire to love and be loved. Rudolf Hoess, the commandant of Auschwitz, wrote sympathetically of the courageous and capable soldiers who did not shrink from doing the necessary evil that it was their duty to do. Giving respect to terrorists set upon the slaughter of innocents is not, contra Dyson, an effective measure for reducing the attraction of their demonically twisted idealism. Quite the opposite is the case. The evil they do is to be objectively named, condemned, despised, and opposed. The subjective state of their mind and soul is the business of God. It is in the absence of God that a shriveled and sentimental humanism produces an inverted morality that requires the gilding of evil with respect for the idealism of its perpetrators.

■ The picture shows a woman with a hole in her body. The hole is the shape of a baby, and behind the woman is the same shape floating in the air as a haunting pres-

ence. Similar pictures can be found in the literature of groups such as Feminists for Life, illustrating the abiding heartbreak of women who had their babies killed by abortion. In this case, however, the picture accompanies a review in the *New York Times Book Review* of a book by Ann Fessler, *The Girls Who Went Away*. The book recounts Ms. Fessler's interviews with one hundred women who gave up their babies for adoption in the years prior to the unlimited abortion license decreed by *Roe v. Wade* in 1973. "The language of adoption," writes the reviewer, Kathryn Harrison, "makes it clear: Babies are surrendered. They're given up. Relinquished. Mothers, even very young and panicked mothers, don't usually part from their babies without a struggle." Fessler tells of a nun in a maternity home saying to a young woman, "Write down on this side of the paper what you can give your baby. Write down on the other side what the adoptive parents have to offer." That the adoptive parents could offer so much more in terms of family and financial security was obvious. On the first side of the paper, however, the young woman wrote simply one word, *Love*. For the reviewer, this is a clinching argument. Unmentioned is that the adoptive parents could also give the baby love. The message of the book and the review is anti-adoption. More explicitly, it is pro-abortion. Because of legal abortion, women in difficult circumstances need no longer have their babies adopted. They can have them killed. That's putting the matter bluntly. In fact, as Paul Swope wrote in these pages in "Abortion: A Failure to Communicate" (April 1998), studies suggest that many unmarried young women who are pregnant view abortion as the least of three evils. They feel that to keep the baby would be a kind of "death" to their life plans and sense of who they are, while to let the baby be adopted would be a form of child abandonment. Abortion presents itself as the easiest way out. The well-documented and widespread consequence is "post-abortion syndrome," which is medical terminology for the most human of responses: a deep and abiding awareness of guilt for having betrayed the most fundamental of bonds, a mother's protection of her child. We can be rather sure, however, that a book telling the stories of women who experience lasting remorse about having had an abortion would not be reviewed, never mind reviewed favorably, in the *Times*.

■ I had some fun in my book *Catholic Matters* with the rationale offered by the bishops of England and Wales when, many years ago, they rescinded mandatory Friday abstinence from meat. The gist of their explanation was that the practice might make Catholics feel that they are different. The elimination of Catholic differences has done wonders for church life in the UK. The

logic is that making it easier to be Catholic will generate greater interest in being Catholic. It obviously doesn't work that way. Never mind, the bishops of England and Wales have now decided to move holy days—Epiphany, Ascension, and Corpus Christi—to the nearest Sunday. The press release says that the change is needed "to boost Mass attendance on Holy Days." Boosting Mass attendance on holy days by eliminating holy days is a neat idea. The release continues: "The circumstances of modern life in England and Wales has made it impossible for a large proportion of the Catholic community to attend Holy Days." Impossible or just inconvenient? Inconvenience is part of doing one's duty. It has always been the case that the obligation in what are called holy days of obligation does not apply to those for whom attendance is truly impossible. Christmas Day, the Assumption of Mary, and All Saints will not be moved to a Sunday of convenience. It doesn't say so, but one assumes that Ash Wednesday and Good Friday will also continue to be observed on their respective weekdays.

■ I was asked the other day to contribute to a national symposium on the changing meanings of *liberal* and *conservative*. I declined. I rather dislike the business of defining political or ideological labels, although it goes on and on and maybe even serves a necessary purpose in some way not readily discerned. James Nuechterlein, former editor of *FIRST THINGS*, would regularly, with a wry smile, sum up his philosophy: "Change is bad." He is given to wry smiles. British prime minister Lord Palmerston is reported to have said, "Change, change, change! All this talk about change! Aren't things bad enough already?" A later prime minister, Lord Salisbury, contemplating developments in the Middle East, remarked, "Whatever happens will be for the worse, and therefore it is in our interest that as little should happen as possible." Then there was my father of revered memory who said of a colleague, "He's so conservative that, had he been present at the creation, he would have voted for chaos." So you can see I didn't have much to contribute to the symposium.

■ Please say it three times after me: preimplantation genetic haplotyping. It is a new technique for screening embryos for six thousand inherited diseases. Elizabeth R. Schiltz, a law professor, writes in *BusinessWeek*: "From time to time, we are all confronted with the disconnect between how we see ourselves and how others see us. I've always seen myself as a responsible, law-abiding citizen. I recycle, I vote, I don't drive a Hummer. But I've come to realize that many in the scientific and medical community view me as grossly irresponsible. Indeed, in the words of Bob Edwards, the scientist

who facilitated the birth of England's first test-tube baby, I am a 'sinner.' A recent book even branded me a 'genetic outlaw.' My transgression? I am one of the dwindling number of women who receive a prenatal diagnosis of Down syndrome and choose not to terminate our pregnancies. So when I hear about medical breakthroughs like preimplantation genetic haplotyping (PGH)—a new technique to screen embryos in the in vitro fertilization process for 6,000 inherited diseases—I can't help but see 6,000 new reasons that parents will be branded as sinners or made to feel socially irresponsible for bringing their children into this world." Prof. Schiltz is author of *Defiant Birth: Women Who Resist Medical Eugenics*. For many people, aborting a potentially "defective child" is a no-brainer. Such a child would be an intolerable burden upon the parents, upon the family, and upon society. Many others simply refuse prenatal screening altogether, or only for the purpose of discovering a problem that might be remedied in the womb. Their commitment is to accepting and loving the life entrusted to them. But Prof. Schiltz is right: With the return of eugenics, such people are increasingly viewed as antisocial, if not "outlaws." The late Christopher Lasch wrote that we congratulate ourselves on our moral progress because we no longer tolerate "freak shows" at the county fair. The real reason, he said, is that we are fast becoming a society that has no tolerance of, no place for, freaks. They should never have been allowed to be born. Moral discourse today, especially in the academy, is rife with talk about respecting the "other." So long as the other is not so other as to be a burden.

■ Gays pressing for same-sex marriage are, in fact, strengthening "family values" conservatism. That is the complaint of gay activist Bill Dobbs and others who long for the old days when the gay subculture of bathhouses and unbridled promiscuity defied bourgeois constraints. The proponents of same-sex marriage are, he says, agreeing with an oppressive social order when they say, "You must be coupled to be really fulfilled, for us to treat you as a full person." On the contrary, he insists, a choice to be gay is a choice for promiscuity—he calls it "sexual generosity"—in which "every man is linked to every other man by at least the potential of being his lover." At the same time, 250 academics, celebrities, and writers have issued a manifesto titled "Beyond Same-Sex Marriage: A New Strategic Vision for All Our Families and Relationships." The manifesto is signed by, inter alia, Gloria Steinem, Barbara Ehrenreich, Rabbi Michael Lerner, and Cornel West. While supporting same-sex marriage, they insist that a similar recognition should be extended to all kinds of relationships involving any number of people who are connect-

ed in whatever ways they choose. Opponents have long said that that is the logic of the push for same-sex marriage, and now at least some supporters of same-sex marriage agree. Between the debased libertinism of Bill Dobbs and others, on the one hand, and the polyamorous social revolution proposed by "Beyond Same-Sex Marriage," on the other, some conservatives may find themselves in the odd position of looking more favorably on the bathhouses. They may figure that the toleration of a subculture, no matter how morally abhorrent, is to be preferred to the dismantling of the social order. The politics of marriage and family makes for, if one may be permitted the phrase, strange bedfellows.

■ A big spread on the front page of the *New York Times* features the Rev. Gregory A. Boyd, a megachurch pastor in Maplewood, Minnesota. "Disowning Conservative Politics, Evangelical Pastor Rattles Flock." Boyd has been outspoken against evangelicals who equate allegiance to Christ with loyalty to the Republican party and is offended by those who appear to displace the cross with the flag. Fair enough. There no doubt are such excesses and distortions, some of them bordering on blasphemy. One has to wonder, however, whether the Rev. Boyd is alert to the way he is being used by the *Times* to advance one side in the very "culture war" that he says evangelicals should eschew. To paraphrase: Woe to you when the *New York Times* portrays you as a hero. Laurie Goodstein, the reporter, makes much of Boyd's denial that America is a "Christian nation." Demographically and in terms of its beginning and continuing cultural dynamics, America is inexplicable apart from Christianity. It is, in that sense, a Christian nation. If one means by Christian nation, however, a nation singularly marked by Christian virtue or divine election, America is decidedly not a Christian nation. The insistence of the *New York Times* and many others is that America is a secular nation gravely threatened by Christianity, and most particularly by Christian conviction applied to the public order. It is perfectly understandable that the paper celebrates on its front page a Christian leader whose position can be construed, or misconstrued, in support of that understanding of religion and public life.

■ On the cliff by the thruway in large white letters somebody had painted "Jesus Saves." Frederick Buechner reflects: "In the depths of his own pain the good thief said, 'Jesus, remember me when you come in your kingly power.' Remember me. Remember me. Jesus said, 'I will.' He said preposterously, 'Today you will be with me in Paradise.' Spindle-shanked crackpot, Mary's boy, God's son, flattened out on a face of a cliff, like a

spider he scrambles up past the four-letter words and the names of lovers to slap up his preposterous pitch—*Jesus Saves*—and the preposterousness, the vulgarity almost, of those words that make us wince is finally, of course, the vulgarity of God himself. The vulgarity of a God who adorns the sky at sunrise and sundown with colors no decent painter would dream of placing together on a single canvas, the vulgarity of a God who created a world full of hybrids like us—half ape, half human—and who keeps breaking back into the muck of this world. The vulgarity of a God who was born into a cave among hicks and the steaming dung of beasts only to grow up and die on a cross between crooks. The vulgarity of a God who tampers with the lives of crooks, of clowns like me to the point where we come among crooks and clowns like you with white paint and a brush of our own and nothing more profound to say, nothing more precious and crucial to say finally, than just ‘Yes, it is true. He does save—Jesus. He gives life, he makes whole, and if you choose to be, you will be with him in paradise.’” That’s from *Secrets in the Dark: A Life in Sermons*. Frederick Buechner, a Presbyterian, is an old man now and this may be among his last books of sermons, if not his last. The collection includes a very early sermon preached at Phillips Exeter Academy around 1959 to boys who he assumed thought religion was “hogwash” and were only there because chapel attendance was required. That was a long time ago. Buechner is in the tradition of the Protestant pulpit toward the end of the mainline’s secure establishment, when eloquence joined to craftsmanship, plus a theology mistakenly assumed to be unthreatened by accommodation, appealed to the cultured despisers of religion, young and old, in the hope of persuading them to give a hearing to the possibility that religion is not hogwash. The tone is typically tentative, literary, teasing, exploratory, and not without a powerful charm. William Willimon, a Methodist in the post-establishment of that pulpit tradition, says of the book, “Here is the word made wondrous.” Catholic priests accustomed to jotting down a few notes to fill up the time for the homily, and evangelical preachers content with rabbling the amen corner, might benefit by reading *Secrets in the Dark*.

■ Alan Wolfe of Boston College, writing in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, offers an extended response to my “Dechristianizing America” in our June/July issue. In that essay, I singled out Mr. Wolfe, who is director of the Boisi Center for Religion and American Public Life, as representative of secular writers who, for complicated reasons, seem determined to make the case that Christianity in America is not really very Christian, and therefore non-Christians need not fear it

or pay it much mind. I discuss this in more detail in my December 2003 review of Mr. Wolfe’s book *The Transformation of American Religion: How We Actually Live Our Faith*. For a fuller explanation of my difficulties with Mr. Wolfe, you might want to take a look at that. His argument is made problematic by, among other things, his insistence that the “we” in the subtitle and the “faith” under discussion is not Christianity or Judaism but his preferred understanding of American culture. As he wrote in his book, “In every aspect of the religious life, American faith has met American culture—and American culture has triumphed.” This is obviously what he wants to believe and wants his readers to believe. While Wolfe calls attention to his having on occasion said kind (if condescending) things about religious conservatives, his own ideology is radically secularist. In his *Chronicle* essay, Mr. Wolfe says that I resent a non-Christian writing about Christianity because such an outsider is “presuming to venture onto his turf.” That is nonsense. I have frequently paid tribute to non-Christians, for instance the Jewish Will Herberg, who have written very intelligently about Christianity in America. “Most insidious,” writes Wolfe, is my suggesting “that Jews, or members of any religious minority, do not quite qualify for full membership in a Christian society.” That is vicious nonsense and not deserving of a response. Permit me to make it as clear as I can possibly can: My problem with Mr. Wolfe’s writings on American religion is that he does not inquire into its internal dynamics; he is by his own declaration unsympathetic to it; he evidences little intellectual curiosity about it; and his putative research is more or less consistently in the service of his ideological argument that religion in America is, at best, culturally epiphenomenal. In his *Chronicles* response, Mr. Wolfe again says that he does not have a religious bone in his body. He does not seem to recognize that that is more than a little like a music critic saying he does not have a musical bone in his body. The music critic need not be a musician any more than Mr. Wolfe needs to be a believer, but it would seem exceedingly odd if he encouraged indifference to music. I have no objection to Mr. Wolfe belonging to the world he describes as “We secularist public intellectuals.” He says his status as an outsider may give him a useful perspective on religion, and that could be. He does not allow, however, that another person’s status as an outsider may provide a useful perspective on the world of “secularist public intellectuals.” But again, my chief problem with Mr. Wolfe is that he does not seem to be very interested in the subject on which he presents himself as an expert, namely, religion in America. His lack of intellectual curiosity about the subject on which he writes makes it hard to take him seriously. I am sorry he was offended

by my little essay, but I cannot help but think he would be happier if he took up a subject that he deemed more worthy of his attentions.

■ Hunter Rawlings III is president of Cornell University, and a couple of months ago he gave a thoughtful lecture titled "Intelligent Design and the Place of Religiously Based Ideas in American Politics" at the Woodrow Wilson Center in Washington, D.C. While Intelligent Design is mentioned in passing, his chief concern is with religionized politics and politicized religion. He said: "Politics is in large part a function of culture"; and 'at the heart of culture is religion,' Richard John Neuhaus wrote three decades ago, as he worried that the public square had become 'naked,' that is, shorn of religious belief and values. Neuhaus, as it turned out, had nothing to fear. But Madisonians do." That, I would suggest, is much too neat. To his credit, however, Rawlings bites the bullet on the question that most powerfully divides and that leads liberals in the academy and elsewhere to think that they are under siege from a theocratic popular reaction:

Abortion is the most divisive domestic issue afflicting America today. We academics have consistently misunderstood and undervalued religious arguments about abortion, much to our own and the nation's detriment. Our inability to appreciate the role of religious conviction in discussing abortion is probably the single greatest cause of our diminished role in public policy debate.

Most academics are secular humanists. That is neither surprising nor especially noteworthy, but academic disdain for religion, specifically for Christianity, is noteworthy, and it has unfortunate consequences. Such disdain diminishes the capacity of many academics to understand American culture and politics, and thus lessens their influence in the public square.

It is thought-provoking to note that, although it is liberals who have moved America to an ever more inclusive definition of humanity and human rights over the past century, it is now anti-abortion advocates who are calling for expanding our conception of human life. This is the religious voice speaking, like Abolitionists in the 19th century, while, on the other side, liberal academics seem often to accord more respect to animal rights arguments than to appeals for the "rights of the fetus."

It takes courage for a person in Rawlings' position to say that. I have both quibbles and serious disagreements with some of what he said, but we are at one in affirming the wisdom of Reinhold Niebuhr, whom he quotes as saying, "The religion which is socially most useful is one which can maintain a stubborn indiffer-

ence to immediate ends and thus give the ethical life of man that touch of the absolute without which all morality is finally reduced to a decorous but essentially unqualified self assertiveness."

■ The major Swedish papers ran the item on the inside pages. It was no big deal. Anders Wejryd was elected archbishop of Uppsala, making him the primate, so to speak, of the Swedish church. The electors belong to various diocesan and national councils controlled by the political parties. Few of them, and even fewer of the general population, ever darken a church door. The Swedish church is a wholly owned subsidiary of the Swedish state. A minority of Swedish clergy and the churchgoing laity have theological objections to the ordination of women to the priesthood, but Wejryd and the controlling political parties are solidly with the pro-feminist, pro-gay agenda. *Svenska Dagbladet* reports that in an interview, "Wejryd was asked how he would describe himself as a leader. He compared himself to a circus director—everybody may do their tricks." It brought back memories from years ago when my friend James Morton became dean of St. John the Divine, the Episcopal cathedral in New York. It was his goal, he said, to turn the cathedral into a circus. Which he did. I suggested at the time that he was overrating his entertainment value. Archbishop Wejryd is not all fun and games, however. After his appointment, he told *Dagens Nyheter* he would not hesitate to report to the police priests who refuse to work with ordained women. "We have a law against discrimination and in these cases it is question of particularly insulting treatment." Who was it who said that where orthodoxy is optional it will sooner or later be proscribed?

■ The ACLU is fond of saying that the remedy for speech you don't like is more speech. Following that maxim, it famously supported the right of Nazis to march through a largely Jewish neighborhood that included Holocaust survivors. It seems the ACLU remedy for speech opposed to abortion, however, is to shut up the speaker. The Reproductive Freedom Project of the ACLU is hard at work trying to outlaw license plates that carry the message "Choose Life." The older principle of more speech as the remedy might suggest that the ACLU should be pressing for license plates with "Choose Abortion" or "Choose Death," but for some reason they are not pursuing that tactic. At the same time, in New York and elsewhere, the ACLU is supporting legislation that would outlaw advertising by crisis-pregnancy centers. The centers, they claim, engage in deceptive advertising by saying that they help women with problem pregnancies when, in fact, they do not offer the ACLU's favored

form of help, namely, getting rid of the baby. Now deceptive advertising is no doubt a bad thing. Perhaps the ACLU should go after the nation's largest institutional perpetrator of abortions, an organization that deceptively calls itself *Planned Parenthood*.

■ Smiting the vulgarians hip and thigh, and doing so with impressive wit and erudition, is always great fun. Readers of Theodore Dalrymple get to join in the pleasures of his outrage in a new collection of essays, *Our Culture, What's Left of It: The Mandarins and the Masses*. Dalrymple is the pseudonym of a physician working in the slums and prisons of England, and his focus is on what has gone wrong with the mandarins and masses of Britain. That's what bothers Richard Davenport-Hines, who reviews the book in the *Times Literary Supplement*. "Dalrymple has, it must be stressed, written an urgent, important, almost essential book." He agrees with Dalrymple that the legendary British reticence, fortitude, and good taste have been replaced by "the hug-and-confess culture" that is marked by "a banal, self-pitying, witless, and shallow emotional incontinence." "A nation famed not so long ago for the restraint of its manners," writes Dalrymple, "is now notorious for the coarseness of its appetites and its unbridled and anti-social attempts to satisfy them." Weekend mass alcoholic binges routinely terrorize town centers, and British soccer fans are as feared as carriers of the plague. With all this, and much more, Davenport-Hines agrees, but he complains that almost all of Dalrymple's essays were written for American audiences in publications such as *City Journal* and the *New Criterion*. What Dalrymple fails to tell his American readers, says Davenport-Hines, is that the emotional incontinence and cultural collapse of Britain is imported from America. Who invented Oprah and fast food and the shrieking pseudo-emotion of confessional television shows? His review ends on this note: "Theodore Dalrymple does not tell his American readers what they do not want to hear. He confronts so many bullies and demolishes so much delusive thinking in this brave, emphatic, and undeniably important book; but the greatest ogre of all he will not even name." The greatest ogre is, of course, the export of the trash of American popular culture.

■ I'm not so sure. My impression—based, admittedly, on limited experience—is that Dalrymple (and Davenport-Hines) are right about the dramatic change in British public life and national character. Except for the urban underclass and perhaps the denizens of the tackier trailer parks of America, junk television—never mind McDonald's and Burger King—has not had as great a debilitating effect upon American life. Iowa

City and Bethesda, Maryland, are not shut down on weekends by hordes of thugs on a binge. Maybe it has something to do with America's being a more open society less dominated by mannerly proprieties. The entertainment, including television entertainment, of emotional incontinence is just that, entertainment. It is taken in stride. The once-famed British style of reticence, deference, and the stiff upper lip was something more brittle. It snapped upon encountering the excesses of freedom to which Americans are accustomed. I expect Dalrymple may agree, and he may further agree that religion has much to do with the difference. Of British secularization he writes: "The loss of the religious understanding of the human condition—that man is a fallen creature for whom virtue is necessary but never fully attainable—is a loss, not a gain, in true sophistication. The secular substitute—the belief in the perfection of life on earth by the endless extension of a choice of pleasures—is not merely callow by comparison but much less realistic in its understanding of human nature." Britain, and Western Europe more generally, having largely abandoned the religious depth-dimension of their own cultures, are much more susceptible to the invasion not of Americanism but of America's more meretricious cultural exports. That, at least, is a hypothesis worth entertaining. Of course, others may say that we have always been a more barbarous people and are therefore indifferent to the latest assault upon decorum and decency. Another and less contemptuous way of putting the matter is that we are more culturally resilient. Unlike others, such as Davenport-Hines, who complain about their societies being infected by the American disease, we were early on inoculated against our excesses. The resulting immunity is far from total, but it provides a measure of protection.

■ Here is something of great beauty. *A Drama of Reform* is a very handsome book from Ignatius Press that marks the twentieth anniversary of the beginning of the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal (now the Franciscan Friars and Sisters of the Renewal). The thing of greatest beauty is the story it tells of a vibrant religious community arising from the ashes of so much that went wrong with monastic life in recent decades. The book includes numerous pictures and commentaries that are framed within the mysteries of the Rosary. Fr. Benedict Groeschel was the initiator and is the continuing spiritual guide of this remarkable community that is attracting vocations from around the world and is now establishing outposts in Europe and Latin America. In his introduction to *A Drama of Reform*, Fr. Benedict reflects on why a reform of the reform, as he calls it, is necessary. There is, for instance, this:

Having counseled clergy for decades, I can testify that many priests left the ministry because their faith had been undermined or at least had shifted from certitude to a hopeful supposition or positive opinion. In such an atmosphere, the personal experience of a relationship with Christ disappears. It stands to reason that a total commitment of one's life to discipleship, which is what religious life is supposed to be, was thereby undermined. So was the vocation of the diocesan priest. But because many religious orders provided security and retirement, some who had lost any sense of discipleship stayed on, most of them doing an honest day's work for their daily support, but with an ever diminishing sense of devotion and discipleship.

The past fifty years have witnessed an unprecedented interest in popular psychology, and no group has been more psychologized than the clergy—first the Protestants, then the Catholics, and finally members of religious communities. Many schools of clinical psychology that were in vogue during that era—for example, the Freudian and the Jungian—have all but gone by the board for many of the same reasons that the historical/critical study of Scripture is beginning to be questioned. While claiming to be scientific, they repeatedly ignored the rules of scientific investigation.

Unfortunately, therapists of all kinds took on the work of spiritual directors and the care of souls, even if they were unbelievers. I have written about this popular procedure, which went against the tradition of religious life and substituted shaky psychological theories, some of them obviously antireligious, for guidance based on Scripture, tradition, and the teaching of the saints. Psychology well understood and confined to its own proper provenance could be and was helpful, but psychology as a religion was a disaster. The almost complete naturalism that followed thus lost sight of sin (both original and actual), grace, conversion, God's providence, and the necessity of faith, hope, and charity. There was no place for devotion to Christ, which was seen as a form of sublimation or a manifestation of the need to have a hero. The consequence was a series of scandals involving people identified as following the three vows but who actually followed none of them. It is one of the tragedies of the history of organized religion, including the Catholic Church, that when bad ideas enjoy a time of popular acceptance, little is done to identify and reject them, even when they do much harm.

A Drama of Reform, however, is not a critique of what went wrong so much as it is the compelling story of the many young men and women determined to get it right. The "it" they are determined to get right is an unqualified response to the invitation of Jesus, "Come, follow me." Clergy, religious, laypeople, Catholics, Protestants, Orthodox—anyone desiring a deeper

understanding of that invitation—will be challenged, inspired, and perhaps directed by the stories told in *A Drama of Reform*.

■ Here is a sad-funny piece in *Nicotine Theological Journal*. When Evangelicals and Catholics Together (ECT) came out with its statement on "The Gift of Salvation," it prompted a critical response from several dozen Reformed (Calvinist) pastors, teachers, and sundry other leaders. In 1996 they met in Cambridge, Massachusetts, to form the Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals and issued a sharp rebuke of evangelicals involved in ECT for having compromised the Reformation teaching of "justification by faith alone." The Alliance statement was widely hailed as a landmark in various Protestant worlds. Now, ten years later, John R. Muether looks back on the Alliance and its Cambridge Declaration. Some of its chief movers have died, others have lost interest, and yet others have abandoned the Reformed tradition altogether, having embraced new theological enthusiasms. Muether writes: "If the Cambridge Declaration was an evangelical consensus moment, it fizzled dramatically. The past decade witnessed remarkable changes in the landscape of the American Reformed and evangelical world—Rick Warren's purpose driven spirituality has eclipsed Bill Hybels' contagious Christianity, emerging churches are brazenly rejecting any demands for theological or liturgical coherence, and micro-Presbyterian denominations seem to sprout up almost as fast as micro-breweries." He notes, however, that the World Reformed Fellowship has announced that it is working on a new statement of the Reformed faith for the twenty-first century. So perhaps not all is lost.

■ As the Anglican Communion continues to agonize over its future, or whether it has one, it is reassuring to know there are voices of moral sobriety underscoring the fundamentals of right and wrong, good and evil. Richard Chartres, bishop of London and the third-ranking hierarch of the Church of England, has published a book on environmental concerns, *Treasures on Earth*. "Making selfish choices such as flying on holiday or buying a large car," he says, "are a symptom of sin. Sin is living a life turned in on itself where people ignore the consequences of their actions." Rowan Williams, archbishop of Canterbury, endorses the book, noting, "We make choices of moral significance and our relation to the environment is no exception." Chartres says humanity must reduce its "carbon footprint" on planet earth. The London *Sunday Times* story on Chartres' campaign observes that the Church of England "owns some of the largest and draughtiest buildings in Britain, including medieval cathedrals, gothic churches, and

aging parsonages." Not mentioned is that the long-standing Catholic offer to take the cathedrals and churches back may be withdrawn in view of environmental-impact studies. While their spiritual and aesthetic value is not disputed, the environmentally conscientious now realize that those cathedrals should not have been built in the first place. "We have no right to appeal to our contemporaries on this issue if we have failed to put our own house in order," says Chartres, whose name suggests that he may know a thing or two about cathedrals. The story reports that Lambeth Palace, the residence of Rowan Williams, has been audited and criticized "for using inefficient light bulbs rather than the low-energy alternatives." Light and energy at the heart of the Anglican Communion. It seems that, at last, something is being done about it.

■ "Faith, Reason, God and Other Imponderables" is the title of Cornelia Dean's roundup of recent books on science and religion in the *New York Times*. There is a slew of them, some reflecting a concern to rehabilitate the reputation of science among believers. Owen Gingerich, author of *God's Universe*, says of Richard Dawkins, who contends that evolutionary theory and atheism are inseparably linked, that he "singlehandedly makes more converts to intelligent design than any of the leading intelligent design theorists." Ms. Dean's report reads a little like those endless stories about how the Democratic party is trying to recast itself as religion-friendly. As in those efforts, the attitude toward religion is smugly condescending. Biologist Lewis Wolpert is quoted: "We have to both respect, if we can, the beliefs of others, and accept the responsibility to try and change them if the evidence for them is weak or scientifically improbable." In other words, we scientists will attend to reason and will try to bring those irrational believers around in time. Ms. Dean sums up what she has learned: "This is where the scientific method comes in. If scientists are prepared to state their hypotheses, describe how they tested them, lay out their data, explain how they analyze their data and the conclusions they draw from their analyses—then it should not matter if they pray to Zeus, Jehovah, the Tooth Fairy, or nobody." Science and religion are reconciled by everybody agreeing that science is about truth and religion is about private whimsy. You have problems with that?

■ In my commentary on Pope Benedict's first encyclical, *Deus Caritas Est* (FIRST THINGS, May 2006), I noted some striking parallels with Martin Luther's treatment of the "right hand" and "left hand" rule of God and the distinction between love and justice. I opined that other theologians might want to explore that aspect of the encyclical more fully. Which is just what Paul Hinlicky,

professor of Luther studies at Roanoke College, Virginia, has done. Writing in the *Journal of Lutheran Ethics*, he says: "Assured faith, certainly faith in the love of God in spite of contrary experience. The theology of the cross in the face of incomprehensible suffering. The freedom of the Christian—also from political correctness. The simple, direct ministry of charity to the neighbor in need. The two-kingdoms theology requiring the patient, political, non-utopian work for justice in society. The redemption and sanctification of eros rather than its suppression or renunciation. The primacy of grace over human choice. The real presence of Christ in the Eucharist as the source of Christian discipleship. The firm rejection of terrorism and fanaticism in religion. Faith forming love in the image of the Crucified. All this 'taught with authority, unlike the scribes and the Pharisees.' Shall I go on? Is it any wonder that Lutherans who have any substantial memory of their own tradition slip away to the bosom of the erstwhile foe where that theological tradition, though not (yet) honored by name, is nevertheless honored in fact? It is no wonder. What is a wonder is the Lord of the Church, who works stunning reversals." Prof. Hinlicky sums up with this: "Benedict is our pope, too, even though we remain 'separated' sisters and brothers belonging to an 'ecclesiastical community.' I hope many of us 'separated' will read this encyclical and ones to come. There are perhaps sticking points that others will find more important than the deep commonalities with our forgotten tradition that I have uncovered in this review. No doubt they exist. But it ought deeply to perplex us that our tradition is better preserved today in the Roman Catholic Church than in our own nominally Lutheran Church in America."

■ There was some perfectly understandable grumbling when Theodore Cardinal McCarrick reported on the work of the Task Force on Catholic Bishops and Catholic Politicians to the June meeting of the bishops, and the sum of the task force's labors, after the great brouhahas of the 2004 election year, seemed to be a *laissez faire* recommendation that each bishop decide for himself what to do about politicians in flagrant dissent from the Church's teaching. The complaint was that the bishops could be emphatically explicit about public policy questions such as immigration but, when it comes to the Eucharist, the very "source and summit" of the Church's life, it is every bishop for himself. Well, that is not quite a fair assessment of what has happened. The bishops have assigned to their committees on doctrine and pastoral practices the task of coming up with a thorough statement on worthy reception of the Eucharist. It is expected that the document will be submitted to the bishops at their November meeting, after

this year's political election but well before that of 2008. While the document will address worthy reception on the part of all Catholics, I am told it will also be quite specific about the responsibilities of Catholics in public life. All are urged to stifle the grumbling—or is grumbling already a stifled outcry?—until the bishops get a chance to address these questions more thoroughly in November.

■ Christopher Hitchens has a feisty piece in the *Wall Street Journal* against an amendment to the Constitution that would ban the burning of the flag. He begins by telling how, the night before his interview for U.S. citizenship, he stayed up all night reading the Constitution. "The King James Bible aside," he writes, "the Constitution is probably the greatest document ever composed by a committee." His reverence for the stylistic merits of the King James Bible aside, Mr. Hitchens is very stridently hostile to religion. And, for all his study of the Constitution, he has the same problem with the First Amendment that we noted some while back in connection with the website of the ACLU. The website boldly declared that free speech is the first freedom mentioned in the First Amendment. After it was pointed out that the free exercise of religion is the first freedom of the First Amendment, the ACLU amended its website. Mr. Hitchens' mistake is stated somewhat differently. He writes, "No other country has such a terse and comprehensive statement of the case for free expression: considered important enough to rank first, and also to rank with the freedom of religious conscience." Back to your presumably well-studied text, please, Mr. Hitchens. Free expression does not rank first, unless he means the free expression of religion. But he cannot mean that, because he then says freedom of expression ranks with the freedom of religious conscience. Which, of course, is also wrong, since the first freedom guaranteed by the First Amendment is not the freedom of religious conscience but of religious *exercise*. I'm glad that Mr. Hitchens is a citizen and I don't suggest his citizenship be withdrawn, but it is a nuisance that ideological secularists have such difficulty making their peace with the fact that most of the Founders believed that religious freedom is the foundation of all freedoms. Their right to disagree with the Founders is guaranteed, but their persistent misrepresentation of what the Founders believed and did is at least unseemly.

■ All sixty-five bishops of ELCA Lutheranism signed a plea for what they called a "moral" federal budget. *Forum Letter* overheard this at a pastors' gathering: "I find it remarkable that the conference of bishops aren't of one mind on sexuality, they aren't of one mind on abortion, they aren't of one mind on ordination. But

they are completely of one mind on federal student loans." To which another pastor replied, "Well, they all have kids in college." Think low.

■ From Augustine's *City of God* to Kevin Phillips' *American Theocracy* is a stretch. But Eugene McCarraher of the American Council of Learned Societies manages it with apparent ease. Reviewing Phillips in *Commonweal*, he has nary a dissent from the book's grim depiction of the American circumstance, embracing even the bizarre claim that the Southern Baptist Convention is in thrall to the late R.J. Rushdoony's "Reconstructionist" vision of replacing the Constitution with Bible law. McCarraher writes: "Phillips sees little chance for escape from our harrowing descent into ignominy. Rather, like Hapsburg Spain or Edwardian England, petro-financial-fundamentalist America will sink into a slough of despond, mortgaged to Asian banks, bedazzled by end-times speculation, and narcotized by pabulum about hard work and uplift. In a dispirited conclusion, Phillips implies that the best we can hope for is probably a skillful management of demise. But what if decline turned out to be a blessing? Far too many American Christians conform to the current dogmas of venality, belligerence, and pride. Christians who really mean what they say about the redemptive power of weakness would welcome the ebbing of America strength as a genuine gift of Providence. Disabused of the delusion that the world can't be saved without America's money, computers, and gunships, a nation less selfish and arrogant would certainly be weaker, by the standards of the world, but it would also be a wiser homeland, freer to measure its common life by a saner calculus. And a Christianity relieved of civil-religious duty would be weaker but wiser as well." Christians of a certain mindset are inclined toward nostalgia for the catacombs, yearning to be relieved of the moral responsibilities inconveniently imposed by history. That was certainly not true of St. Augustine, however. In *City of God* he generously recognizes the achievements of the Roman Empire in which he accepted responsibility as a citizen, even as he is keenly aware of the *libido dominandi* that marks all earthly realms. One cannot imagine Augustine relishing the prospect of the empire's "harrowing descent into ignominy" or welcoming its demise as a blessing. In his coda, McCarraher writes of the need for Christians to "set out to achieve another country." What country might that be? Not, it seems, the heavenly Jerusalem, which, in any case, is not ours to "achieve." No, it seems evident from the context and from his uncritical adoption of Kevin Phillips' fevered description of our national calamity that McCarraher is in search of any country other than America. As with Richard Rorty's *Achieving Our Country: Leftist*

Thought in Twentieth-Century America, there is a species of very non-Augustinian patriotism that is prepared to be resolutely loyal to another earthly city of one's own design and desiring that is therefore deserving of one's loyalty. The Augustinian alternative is to accept responsibility for the earthly city in which we find ourselves while reserving our ultimate allegiance for the City of God on its way to the New Jerusalem.

■ *Wicked*, a play that seeks to humanize the Wicked Witch of the West, has been enjoying a long Broadway run. And at Lincoln Center, Grendel of *Beowulf* infamy got a sympathetic remake in the opera *Grendel: Transcendence of the Great Big Bad*. We are given to understand that such villains had unhappy childhoods, justified grievances against others, and so forth. The author of *Wicked* said he got the idea of portraying the witch in a more positive light when he was upset by the "excessive demonization" of Saddam Hussein in the early 1990s. The idea is that people do things that are, if not justifiable, at least understandable, and therefore not evil. Edward Rothstein is prompted to ponder these sympathetic portrayals of evil in connection with a new book by Princeton professor of religion David Frankfurter, *Evil Incarnate: Rumors of Demonic Conspiracy and Satanic Abuse in History*. With exceptions "like Hitler, perhaps, or mothers who kill their children," Rothstein writes, "Mr. Frankfurter seems to suggest that by calling anyone evil, we are simply tapping into the old imagined archetypes without explaining anything." Frankfurter writes: "The real atrocities of history seem to take place *not* in the perverse ceremonies of some evil cult but rather in the course of *purging* such cults from the world. Real evil happens when people speak of evil." Evil, in short, is created by the "discourse" that assumes the reality of evil. Mr. Rothstein, being a sensible fellow, is not persuaded. "Evil is not a term of explanation," he writes. "It is a term of judgment. It states that some phenomena are so abhorrent they should remain beyond empathetic understanding. Of course judgments of evil have been mistaken (though I don't think they have been about Grendel or the Wicked Witch, or about some of the other forces now loose in the world). But when the word is applied to an act, we know just precisely what it means: There is no human excuse." Well, yes, but that will not quite do the job. Contemplating Auschwitz or Dachau or Stalin's gulag, it seems a little limp to say, "There is no excuse for this." The problem is likely with Rothstein's reference to *human* excuse. To speak adequately of evil, one must penetrate to the supra-human source of evil in principalities and powers, in Satan, who would rather rule in hell than serve in heaven and seduces human beings into joining his conspir-

acy. Evil is rebellion against the good and the Good; it is, in the fine phrase of the KJV, "the mystery of iniquity" that would ensnare us. Mr. Frankfurter writes that the "myth of evil conspiracy lies deep in culture—'hard-wired,' as it were, to society and self." Declining such academically fashionable trivializations, one notes that evil conspiracy lies in conspiring with evil, which is no myth.

■ Universities used to matter in a way they no longer do. Of course it is still important, maybe increasingly important, to have a college degree to get on in life, but universities are marginal to the task of informing and sustaining a common culture. Part of the problem is that they have not only succumbed to fashion, but have become the chief generators of fashion, and fashion is the enemy of culture. This is among the arguments in a provocative new book, *The Decline of the Secular University*, by C. John Sommerville, a teacher at the University of Florida and a FIRST THINGS contributor. The university now serves "the news," Sommerville writes. "In the 1960s, intellectuals and even the public talked a lot about Marshall McLuhan's theory of a print revolution at the beginning of modern history, which he explained in books like *The Gutenberg Galaxy* and *Understanding Media*. The theory was that in the sixteenth century printing had decisively changed the way Western minds worked. Print promoted rationality, factual discourse, and linear thinking by fixing subjects so that they didn't get too slippery for careful dissection. Print had revolutionized Western society, secularizing culture and encouraging science. McLuhan went on to point out that we were even then watching another revolution overtake the print revolution. An electronic revolution was encouraging television and films to undermine print culture, leading to a kind of secondary orality. What McLuhan didn't notice was that the essential feature of this electronic revolution had long been present in daily publication. Periodical publication had imperceptibly created a *news consciousness*, a fixation on daily trends and fashions instead of more comprehensive treatments of significant subjects. Over three centuries, news schedules had driven philosophy and such to the margins of culture. Newspapers and books are both printed, to be sure, but they are not the same in their effect. Newspapers are the opposite of books, taking things apart rather than putting them together. You must disassemble reality if you want to make a business of selling information. There must be a new issue or broadcast every day, whether or not the world has turned a corner. Even if journalists are following an old story, they must go in a new direction with it each day. If they can't, they must switch our attention to something else." The news

takes reality apart in order to produce a daily “news product.” The role of the university is to make the connections required for a cultural conversation over time. In carefully dissecting what went wrong, *The Decline of the Secular University* suggests how universities might matter again.

■ They’re tearing down American Airlines Terminal 8 out at JFK airport. I suppose it’s not surprising. When was the last time you were at a major airport that wasn’t in the process of being torn down and rebuilt? But Terminal 8 was special. When it was built in 1960 at what was then called Idlewild, it boasted the world’s largest stained-glass window—317 feet by 23 feet. Some of the smashed glass will be used to make key chains for airline employees. Many years ago, I was lecturing at a famous Catholic church in Minnesota. Its modernistic stained glass obliquely hinted at themes of traditional Christian iconography. If you knew the history, you could make out the blues of Mary receiving the reds of the Holy Spirit, the hint of the twelve human-like figures suggested the apostles, and so forth. In a former age, stained glass in churches played an important pedagogical role. Not in this church much acclaimed for its advanced architecture. Here you had to know the code of the tradition to see that the glass had something to do with the Christian story. On my way back, I landed at Terminal 8 and paused to admire the massive stained-glass window. It dawned on me

that, with some knowledge of traditional iconography and just a little imagination, the art of the American Airlines terminal was every bit as Christian as the glass of the Minnesota church. Of course, the fact that the latter was in a church building suggested that it might have something to do with Christianity. I am really sorry to see Terminal 8 go. I’m not sure that I would be so sorry to see the demise of some church buildings that only obliquely gesture toward the sacred that is their reason for being.

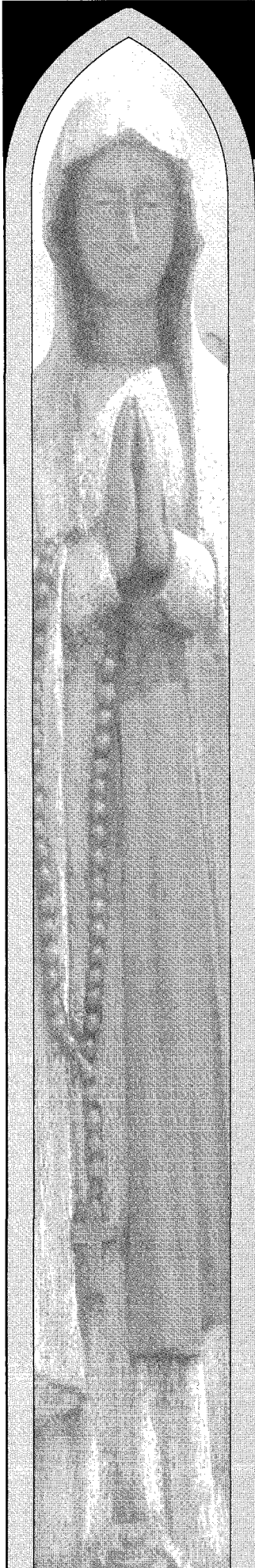
■ The lines of William Cowper (1731–1800) are so familiar that it may be forgotten that somebody actually said them first: *God moves in a mysterious way / His wonders to perform*. Except for what he has clearly revealed, we really do not know what God is up to in the particulars of time, including the part we may be playing. This thought was prompted by a question asked at a recent Barnes & Noble book signing for *Catholic Matters*. How much difference, I was asked, has FIRST THINGS and my much writing really made? I muttered something about my hardly being the best judge of that, and then, all unbidden, came the remembrance of the words from the last verse of Cowper’s “Light Shining Out of Darkness”: *Blind unbelief is sure to err; / And scan his work in vain; / God is his own interpreter, / And he will make it plain*. Precisely, and sufficiently, so.

Sources: Israel in the service of Judaism, *New York Sun*, May 9. Theological impoverishment, *Commonweal*, January 27. Freeman Dyson and terrorism, *New York Review of Books*, June 22. Pro-abortion and anti-adoption, *New York Times Book Review*, June 11. English Catholic holy days, *The Universe*, July 25. Palmerston and Salisbury, *The “Quote . . . Unquote” Newsletter*, July. Prenatal screening, *Business Week*, July. Beyond same-sex marriage, *New York Times*, July 30. Rev. Gregory Boyd and the culture war, *New York Times*, July

30. Alan Wolfe and “Dechristianizing America,” *Chronicle of Higher Education*, July 28. Theodore Dalrymple, *Times Literary Supplement*, 28 October 2005. Confessing Evangelicals, *Nicotine Theological Journal*, April. Anglicans and the environment, *London Times*, July 23. Cornelia Dean, *New York Times*, July 25. Christopher Hitchens, *Wall Street Journal*, July 3. ELCA bishops, Forum Letter, July. Edward Rothstein, *New York Times*, July 24. Terminal 8, *New York Times*, July 23.

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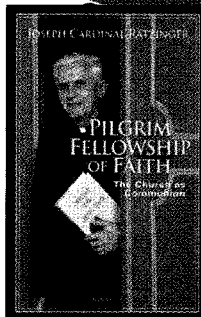
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